

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Central Committee

Minutes of the Forty-Eighth Meeting

Geneva, Switzerland

11 - 19 September 1997





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of the World Council of Churches**

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World Council of Churches

150, route de Ferney

P.O. Box 2100

1211 Geneva 2

ISBN 2-8254-1248-1

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OPENING ACTIONS

I. Worship

Daily morning worship was planned by a group of staff led by Ms Mary Ann Lundy and Rev. Terry MacArthur, and took place in the Chapel of the Ecumenical Centre. On Sunday 14 September participants were invited to attend worship with local congregations; a number were given the opportunity to preach or bring a message of greeting.

At the Opening Worship on the morning of 11 September, Rev. Elizabeth Welch preached the sermon, reflecting on the theme for the Eighth Assembly: "Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope".

II. Call to Order and Welcome

The Moderator, His Holiness Aram I, called to order the forty-eighth meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches at 09.15 hrs on Thursday, 11 September 1997.

His Holiness welcomed participants, giving thanks to God for this opportunity to be together as people committed to the service of the ecumenical movement. Meetings of Central Committee were moments of reflection and action, and it was important to be reminded that these reflections and actions must always be sustained by common faith, hope and vision, otherwise they lost their meaning and credibility. Preparations for the Assembly and the process *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC* would be given major attention during this session. The Moderator urged participants to bring their active participation and contribution to the deliberations and decisions of the last meeting of this Central Committee.

III Roll Call and Seating of Substitutes

The General Secretary called the role of Officers, Presidents and members. Apologies for absence had been received from a number of members whose churches had not been able to send substitutes: Bishop Leslie Boseto, Mr Charles Ajalat, Mr Andrew Mbugo Elisa, Pastor Erasmo Farfan Figueroa, Mr Wsiewolod Konach, Prof. George Koshy, Ms Valamotu Palu, Dr Elsie Philip, Ms Violet Rhaburn, Metropolitan Daniel of Moldavia and Bukovina, Pastor Carlos Sanchez Campos, Bishop Jan Szarek, Archbishop Timotheos, Rev. Martin Wessels.

The seating of substitutes was **agreed** as follows:

- Rev. Tyrone Pitts for Dr Charles Adams
- Ellen Pye for Barbara Bazett
- Rev. Marcel Manoel for Prof. Dr André Birmelé
- Dr Pamela Chinnis for Bishop Edmond Browning
- Rev. Dr Trond Bakkevig for Bishop Bjorn Bue (deceased)
- Ms Grace Chibanhila for Mrs Gladys Chiwanga
- Mr Naboth Muchopa for Mrs Rosey Davies-Izard
- Rev. David Gill for Rev. Wali Fejo
- Rev. Noel Fernando for Rev. Duleep Fernando
- Rev. Dr Hilarion Alfeyev for Mrs Olga Ganaba
- Rev. David Dartey for Ms Beatrice Odonkor
- Bishop Michael Stephen for Bishop Amos Omodunbi
- Ms Jan Cormack for Rev. Rachel Paulin
- Rev. Dr M. Rakotoendor for Pasteur J.-B. Rakotomaro
- Rev. José Leite for Pastor José Salvador
- Dr Kyriaki FitzGerald for Ms Patricia Scoutas
- Rev. Jadasri Saragih for Mr Harrys Sumbayak
- Mr Maone Leausa for Rev. Nove Vailaau
- Dr Joan Parrott for Rev. Dr Daniel Weiss (11-16 Sept)

The following substitutes were appointed during the course of the meeting:

- Very Rev. Nicholas Apostola for Archpriest L. Kishkovsky (16-19 Sept)
- Bishop William Boyd Grove for Dr Janice Love (19 Sept)
- Rev. Jorge Domingues for Bishop Ayres Mattos (19 Sept)
- Rev. Hans Engdahl for Bishop Jonas Jonson (13-15 Sept)
- Rev. Fernando Enns for Dr Margot Kässmann (19 Sept)
- Rev. Dr Hans Frei for Bishop Hans Gerny (17 September only)
- OKR Tim Kuschnerus for Dr Irmele Müller-Stöver (17-19 Sept)
- Dr Bruce Robbins for Mr Ari Carvalho (14-19 Sept)
- Fr Vladimir Shmaly for Fr Vsevolod Chaplin (17 Sept)

The General Secretary then called the names of Delegated Representatives and Delegated Observers, noting with particular appreciation the presence of Msgr John Radano and Msgr John Mutiso-Mbinda from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, who had continued their loyal support for the WCC during the whole period since Canberra.

Dr Raiser then invited Advisers and Observers to stand and be recognised. In particular he mentioned Rev. Keith Clements, who was about to take up

his position as General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches following the retirement of Mr Jean Fischer.

At a later session, the Moderator welcomed former General Secretary Rev. Dr Emilio Castro, who attended a number of plenary sessions.

IV. In Memoriam

The Moderator called for a moment of silent prayer in memory of a number of persons who had been close to the life of the WCC and the ecumenical movement and who had passed away since the last meeting:

Rev. Dr. Eugene Stockwell, former director of WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism until his retirement in 1989, died in October.

Rev. Peter Beier, president of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland, died in November 1996. He was a convinced European and committed ecumenist.

Metropolitan Dr Paulos Mar Gregorios died in November aged 74. He was one of India's leading ecumenists and a former president of the World Council of Churches. From 1962-67 he served as director of the WCC's Division of Ecumenical Action and was a WCC associate general secretary.

Archbishop Olaf Sundby of the Church of Sweden, a WCC president from 1975 to 1983, died in December. He had provided the initiative for convening the Life and Peace Conference which resulted in the formation of the Life and Peace Institute.

Dr M. M. Thomas, one of Asia's most influential theologians, died in December aged 74. He was a speaker at the WCC assemblies in New Delhi 1961 and in Uppsala 1968, and chaired the Church & Society conference of 1966. He was moderator of the WCC Central Committee from 1968 to 1975, the first layperson to hold the post.

Dr Myong Gul Son died on 4 January 1997. He was a leading figure both in the Korean church and in the promotion of human rights.

Ms Elisabeth Adler, a prominent Protestant from East Germany and an advocate of the need for Christians and churches in the communist-ruled state to build a constructive relationship with their Marxist rulers, died in January, aged 70. She will be remembered as a passionate supporter of the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism (PCR).

Rev. Dr Mac Charles Jones, member of Central Committee and Deputy General Secretary for National Ministries of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, died in March 1997, aged 47. He was a commissioner of WCC's Unit II and moderator of the Urban Rural Mission (URM) programme.

Prof. Roger Mehl, leading French Protestant theologian, former member of Central Committee (1968-1975) and of the Faith and Order Commission, died in March. He participated in the 4th and 5th Assemblies of the WCC.

Bishop Björn Bue, a member of Central Committee and Bishop of the Church of Norway, died in April 1997. He contributed immensely to the dialogue between people of evangelical persuasion and Christians of other traditions, particularly with the Orthodox churches.

Dr Paulo Freire, pioneer educator who first linked literacy and social justice, died in Brazil in May 1997, aged 75. He was best known for his theory of *conscientisation*, expounded in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. From 1979 to 1980 he was a consultant on education for the WCC and professor at the University of Geneva.

Rev. Dr Werner Simpfendörfer died in a car accident on 27 June, aged 70. He had served with the Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe at Bad Boll, Germany. A committed ecumenist and pioneer in ecumenical studies on the missionary structure of the congregation, he was part of the WCC's first staff team on education and director of the unit on education and renewal.

Mr Victor Koilpillai, former WCC staff member and editor of *The Ecumenical Review*, died in August 1997.

V. Agenda and Timetable

The General Secretary presented the revised draft agenda, which was adopted.

VI. Minutes of Previous Meeting

No corrections having been received to the minutes of the forty-seventh meeting of the Central Committee held in Geneva, 12-20 September 1996, they were **approved** as circulated.

VII. Appointment of Committees

As was customary, it was **agreed** that the Executive Committee act as the *Staffing and Nominations Committee* of the Central Committee.

The General Secretary indicated that, with a few modifications, the membership of *Unit Committees* remained as before. Those acting as substitutes normally attended the same Unit Committee as the person they were replacing.

Dr Nababan, moderator of the Staffing and Nominations Committee, proposed that the membership of the *Finance Committee* remain as before. This was **agreed**.

VIII Applications for Membership

A. Member Churches

Dr Nababan reported that the Executive Committee had given attention to an application for membership from the Christian Biblical Church, Argentina. This was a Pentecostal church which accepts the divine authority of the Scriptures, believes in the Holy Trinity and confesses Jesus Christ as Son of God and Saviour. The church's origins were in the Italian emigration to Argentina in the early part of the 20th century; it now had a membership of 10,000 and reached out to a church population of over 30,000. Members of the team which visited the church on behalf of the WCC warmly supported the application.

*The Executive Committee recommended to the Central Committee that **the Christian Biblical Church, Argentina**, be received as an associate member church of the World Council of Churches.*

The Central Committee **agreed**.

Dr Nababan further reported that in November 1996, the former United Church in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands (a WCC member church) had been dissolved. Two independent church bodies had since come into being - the United Church in Papua New Guinea and the United Church in the Solomon Islands - and both wished to apply for WCC membership. After considering these two applications, the Executive Committee recommended to the Central Committee that:

the United Church in Papua New Guinea and the United Church in Solomon Islands be recognised as churches in full membership with the World Council of Churches.

The Central Committee **agreed**. It noted with regret that no representative of any of these three new member churches was able to be present at this meeting to receive a personal welcome.

Metropolitan Chrysostomos commented that the fact of receiving two churches into membership in place of one former member church did not seem to be in the interests of the unity of protestantism, but rather of its disunity. He called for consistency in what the Council said and what it did. The Orthodox were increasingly in the minority and it seemed that the WCC was becoming a pan-protestant council - something he could not accept, as the Orthodox had been part of the Council since its beginning.

The General Secretary explained that these two churches had previously been one church as a result of their colonial past. Now that the two countries had found their separate identities the churches wished to respond to the reality of their situation.

B. Associate Councils

It was noted that the Ecumenical Council of Christian Churches of Congo (Conseil Oecuménique des Eglises Chrésiennes du Congo) had applied for associate council status. This Council brings together the main Christian churches of the country including the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Church and the Kimbanguist Church.

Dr Nababan reported that the Executive Committee had considered the application and recommended to the Central Committee

that the Ecumenical Council of Christian Churches of Congo (Conseil Oecuménique des Eglises Chrésiennes du Congo) be received as an associate council of the World Council of Churches.

The Central Committee **agreed**.

C. Organisations in Working Relationship

Reference was made to *Rule XIV: International Ecumenical Organisations* approved by Central Committee in September 1995 which provided such

organisations with the possibility of a closer relationship with the WCC than had been available previously. Applications under this new Rule had been received from twenty organisations:

1. *DIAKONIA World Federation of Diaconal Associations and Diaconical Communities*
2. *Organisation of African Instituted Churches*
3. *World Association for Christian Communication*
4. *World Student Christian Federation*
5. *World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations*
6. *International Christian Youth Exchange - ICYE*
7. *World Day of Prayer - International Committee*
8. *The Fellowship of the Least Coin*
9. *Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians*
10. *Association of World Council of Churches-related Development Organisations in Europe - APRODEV*
11. *Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society - EDCS*
12. *European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society - EECCS*
13. *Life and Peace Institute*
14. *Christian Peace Conference - CPC*
15. *International Federation of the Action of Christians for the Abolition of Torture - FI.ACAT*
16. *Evangelical Community for Apostolic Action*
17. *The Council for World Mission*
18. *United Evangelical Mission*
19. *World Vision International*
20. *Nordic Ecumenical Council*

Dr Nababan moved the recommendation of the Executive Committee

that the above-mentioned organisations be recognised as International Ecumenical Organisations in working relationship with the World Council of Churches, in accordance with Rule XIV of the WCC Constitution and Rules.

The Central Committee agreed.

In response to a question, the General Secretary said that these organisations had already been in working relationship with the Council, and this action was simply a recognition of the fact that these were also essential partners of the WCC in a similar way to NCCs, REOs and CWCs. Further applications would be considered in due course.

IX. Public Issues

The General Secretary reminded members of the procedures with regard to Public Issues, noting that requests for additional items should be given to the Moderator of the Public Issues Committee by midday on the following day.

He then referred to the documents circulated as background material for actions to be taken by Central Committee. The Executive had considered these background notes dealing with specific situations in a number of countries, and proposed that Central Committee take action with regard to Nigeria and Sudan, and that a minute be prepared regarding the effect of sanctions on the civilian population in Iraq. The Central Committee **agreed**.

Dr Nababan presented the list of proposed **Membership of the Public Issues Committee (PIC)** as recommended by the Executive Committee. This was **approved** as follows:

Dr Aaron Tolen - Moderator
Ms Ruth Abraham

Bishop Paulo Ayres Mattos
Fr Vsevolod Chaplin
Rev. David A. Dartey
Ms Rosangela Jarjour

Dr Janice Love
Ms Priyanka Mendis
Bishop Joseph Omoyajowo
Bishop Barry Rogerson
Rev. Dr Paul Sherry

Presbyterian Church, Cameroon
Ethiopian Evangelical Church
Mekane Yesus

Methodist Church in Brazil
Russian Orthodox Church
Christian Council of Ghana
National Evangelical Synod of
Syria and Lebanon

United Methodist Church, USA
Church of Ceylon, Sri Lanka
Church of the Province of Nigeria
Church of England
United Church of Christ, USA

X. First Report of the Finance Committee Moderator

Ms Birgitta Rantakari presented her report, noting that reference had already been made to the Council's financial situation in the reports of the Moderator and the General Secretary. The primary message from the Finance Committee was that, in looking towards the future, the WCC must adjust its life and work to new financial realities. It was no longer possible to rely on predictions with regard to income; traditional funding partners alone could no longer provide all the resources required. Monitoring and evaluation must be done regularly and accurately.

In the coming months the Council must prepare itself for changes. The CUV process would articulate the focus of the WCC for the period after the Harare Assembly, and by the beginning of 1999 the structure, staff and resources capable of achieving the new vision must be in place.

As requested by Central Committee in 1996, models for a unified budget for 1999 and beyond were being prepared. The new style of budget and financial plan included a differentiated view of the Council's income, each source of income requiring its own lines of communication, dialogue and monitoring processes.

The 1996 Financial Report had been sent to members of Central Committee, and although it showed a deficit of CHF 2.4 million, the Council did benefit from good investment returns enabling it to write off General Fund shortfalls and the uncovered costs of staff restructuring expenses. An investment equalisation reserve had also been established.

For the current year so far, both general income and expenditure were below budget while activities income was well below budget - a trend that must be carefully analysed. The budget for 1998 was close to balancing, while the Assembly budget was being kept under constant review. Income development plans were being set up, both for the short and longer-term. Nearly 50% of member churches still made no membership contribution at all.

In conclusion, Ms Rantakari pointed out that it was not sufficient to change the structures in the framework of CUV: working styles must also change, as must the culture of the organisation. The World Council was "churches together" and its organisation must be flexible and capable of reacting to change. The strength was in full commitment to the vision and future of the Council in the next millennium.

XI. Stewards

The General Secretary invited the group of 34 stewards from 31 countries to introduce themselves. The Moderator greeted them warmly, and wished them well in their service to the ecumenical movement which he saw as a way of growing together; indeed, the stewards' programme had already helped them grow together as a community. Participants expressed appreciation for the presence of these young people, and for the enthusiasm they were bringing to the variety of tasks that would facilitate the smooth running of this meeting.

A copy of a publication prepared by an Intern in the Youth Office telling the story of the WCC's Stewards' Programme over the past 50 years entitled "Work, Pray and Sweat" was given to all participants.

REPORTS OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY AND OF THE MODERATOR

I. Report of the General Secretary¹

The General Secretary began his report under the heading *Harvesting the Fruits*, referring to three major programme initiatives which would be presented in plenary session: the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, the Theology of Life programme, and the World Mission Conference held in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil in November/December 1996. He highlighted some of the main aspects of these programmes, noting that they all converged around the need for rebuilding community and shaping a new culture of life and hope. Each constituted an important contribution to the Assembly and the effort to unfold the Assembly theme, "Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope".

Other important programmatic developments were mentioned in the Unit reports and would be dealt with in more detail in the Unit Committees.

After the harvest was the time for evaluation of the work accomplished - and this had to be done as the Council approached its Eighth Assembly. In addition to the popular report (in process of preparation), a more detailed evaluation of programmes had been carried out in all units, teams and offices. Apart from this, the Common Understanding and Vision process and its implications for the internal organisation of the WCC and its governing structures had occupied a good deal of staff attention during the past year. Two plenary sessions would be devoted to reporting on this more fully.

Dr Raiser went on to summarise the actions taken in response to the decisions of Central Committee in 1996 in relation to the CUV process. These included the working out of a new management structure, a unified budget framework and a review of staffing patterns. The Council's financial situation was being consolidated, but even when all the current efforts had been accomplished and the immediate crisis overcome, the point of equilibrium which was

¹ The full text appears in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol.49, no. 4, 1997.

central to the report of the Cambridge Associates in 1991 would still not have been attained. The long-term financial stability of the WCC depended ultimately on the readiness of its member churches and their agencies to take responsibility for their ecumenical instrument, enabling it to fulfil the functions for which it was constituted.

Many responses to the CUV draft had underlined the hopes of the churches that there would continue to be a strong World Council. But what was the basis and source of such strength? To some extent this had been the result of public funding made available for international efforts in the areas of development, human rights, health, education and so on. Numerous ecumenical programmes all over the world had benefited from such funding, and they were facing a difficult future due to the changes in priorities for the use of public funds. So the true source of the strength of the ecumenical movement - the praxis of sharing and solidarity - must be rediscovered.

The final section of the General Secretary's report dealt with the need to look ahead to the Eighth Assembly at Harare. The decision to change the dates to December 1998 had not been easy and caused difficulties for many, which he regretted. But with a number of adjustments, plans were going ahead.

The draft Vision statement centred around an interpretation of the ecumenical movement as the pilgrim people of God on the way, drawn and challenged by the hope for a new way of being the church. For such a vision to come alive, it must be contextualized, and some of this would happen at the Assembly. And such a vision could provide orientation for the ecumenical movement and the WCC on their way into the 21st century. The challenges ahead must be confronted, and one of these was globalisation.

The globalisation of economic markets was seriously harming the common good, environmental sustainability and democracy, said Dr Raiser. Further, globalisation was a description of trends and developments over more than 20 years. But there were contradictions: while it provided increasing opportunities for cooperation and participation, it also marginalised and excluded. He believed globalisation was to a large degree the result of decisions of governments wedded to neo-liberal economic theory. The goal of the globalisation of markets was replacing the search for a viable order of world community and was being promoted as "unquestioned truth" by various international institutions.

Other aspects of globalisation included the global character of ecological threats; the electronic revolution, particularly its effect on communication,

transport, production and finance; and the disintegration of the communist world which had left western capitalism as the sole competitor for global leadership.

The ecumenical movement must resist globalisation as an ideological and political project but could not easily opt out of the "historical dynamic and ambiguities of global interdependence". Christianity was committed to the unity of humankind, and the WCC could not easily join hands with a wholesale rejection of globalisation. Its task was to put forward an alternative understanding and vision of the process which would lead to international behaviour for the benefit of everyone as well as for the environment.

Concluding, Dr Raiser said there was today a clearer recognition that the challenge of globalisation must lead to a re-examination of our ecumenical commitment, freeing the critical potential of this alternative vision of global reality and enabling it to become a source of inspiration for rebuilding community, for developing and strengthening a culture of life and hope. This implied a new understanding of what it meant to be the church - a concern that was at the centre of the Vision Statement proposed for the Harare Assembly. The Assembly theme invited us to **"Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope"** - and it was precisely this call to conversion, drawn by a vision of hope, which should be our response to the challenge of globalisation.

Discussion

Speakers in the ensuing debate expressed their appreciation for the General Secretary's report and many took up the issue of globalisation.

Metropolitan Kirill welcomed the development of the relationships side of the Council's work but expressed concern that the General Secretary had made no reference to the withdrawal from WCC membership of the Georgian Orthodox Church earlier in the year. He reiterated that many Orthodox Churches were encountering severe problems and these could not be ignored by the World Council; indeed, many were the object of strong criticism because they maintained relationships with the WCC and the ecumenical movement. He had been hoping for support from the Council's leadership for the Russian Orthodox Church's activities, but to his regret he had not found this so far.

Metr. Kirill welcomed the opportunity for discussion on the theme of globalisation, but pointed out that for Christians it was the moral and spiritual viewpoints that should receive attention. Perhaps the Council should play a greater role in the creation of moral standards.

Dr Patelos was grateful for the Theology of Life programme which he felt to be of great importance at the approach of a new millennium. The ethical dimension relating to social action tended to be forgotten - but that must not happen. Secondly, the western world had completely changed its social fabric and had become intellectually impoverished and morally abandoned. He urged the WCC as a council of churches in cooperation with others to work out a theology that would speak to the wealthy and the powerful in order to avoid this tragic situation developing further, even into another major war.

Ms Nontawasee also underlined the spiritual dimension as being the challenge to the churches in the area of globalisation. Its impact related not only to politics and economics but had led to the collapse of the family and family values, as well as to increasing corruption in many parts of the world.

Bishop Krusche reminded Central Committee of the study document prepared at its request by the Advisory Group on Economic Matters of the former Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD), entitled *Abundant Life for All: Christian Faith and the World Economy Today*. After discussion in 1991, this was received by Central Committee in August 1992 and was subsequently published. The Bishop expressed disappointment that this text when revised had lost some of its sharpness, but felt that nevertheless it should not be neglected in preparing for the assembly, especially in relation to Africa and the consequences of globalisation. He urged Unit III to give attention to this prior to the assembly.

The negative impact of globalisation on small states which daily suffer the effects of marginalisation and exclusion was stressed by Bishop Gomez. Governments of Caribbean nations had become powerless to combat the market forces which demand a high level of production, because they were unable to produce at the same level as larger countries. He would welcome the support of the churches elsewhere in their struggle, since the UN had not given attention to the issue and the only conclusion to be drawn was that market forces were becoming the most important factors in world trade, detracting from what it means to be human.

Mr Akhura stressed the urgency of looking seriously at the situation in Africa and was grateful for the WCC's programme on Reconstructing Africa. He pointed out that one of the continent's major problems lay in the boundaries established by western missionaries that took little account of natural boundaries. He felt there was no point in spending funds on reconstruction until this question had been dealt with through the assistance of international agencies.

Ellen Pye raised the issue of militarisation, noting that a too large proportion of international economies were taken up by the arms trade. Could the WCC not give attention to the matter and become instrumental in exposing this evil activity? To a large extent these weapons were despatched for use in civil wars which were especially destructive of communities.

Although the change of dates for the Assembly had caused inconvenience for many, as an African Dr Mandeng ma Mbeleg asked for understanding. One of the principles of gospel and culture was adaptation, and it would be necessary for those going to Harare to adapt to the context, bearing in mind that Africans have a different style of planning from that used in the west.

Metropolitan Athanasios referred to the different uses of the term globalisation especially in relation to the global community of churches which the WCC had become. Relating it to the assembly theme "Turn to God" was important for the vision of Harare and even more important for the future.

Dr Walker-Smith stressed the role of the media in relation to globalisation; for example, what were the ethical issues here?

Mr Allsop spoke of the danger of polarising a very complex process. Certainly many Christians who were within the mainstream of what many would term "market driven forces" were wrestling with this problem, and with the ethics of what it means to be part of these forces for globalisation. He wondered whether the World Council might not take the initiative to start a dialogue, or some kind of ethical forum, with people in the system: this could offer opportunity to play a prophetic role and avoid polarisation.

On the question of membership contributions, Mme Seddoh felt that these showed the degree to which a church felt it was part of the community, but it was important not to let this become an obstacle to participation for some churches. She urged that church leaders be made aware of the importance of ensuring that as many member churches as possible were represented at the assembly.

Dr Crow saw three critical issues facing the Council: firstly, accountability to the churches. The current crisis was due not only to what was happening in the world but also to what the churches were not doing. It was not just a question of finance but of moral accountability to the churches. So the focus must be on the churches themselves; by living the ecumenical vision within Christian communities, the WCC would be a stronger body. The second issue was that of Gospel and Cultures - but there seemed to be more reference to

culture than to the gospel. Without the gospel, this debate was irrelevant. Globalisation was also a source of potential danger: what was the nature of globalisation and how did that convey the ecumenical vision? Dr Crow warned against using this term glibly - rather speak of *koinonia*, the universal character of the church. Ultimately the question was: did globalisation lead to one universal church expressed locally and universally? Unless we read it in these terms we become part of a secular group critiquing what is wrong in the world rather than offering the gifts of God to the people of God.

In the context of globalisation, what did it mean to be the church, asked Dr Blei. What did it mean for ecumenical discussions, for bilateral dialogues? In the course of its history the church had adapted to different situations, and now it was necessary to seek a new understanding of what it meant to be the church.

Mr Mendez felt it was important for those from the third world to know that others were also concerned with the issue of globalisation. We must continue working on the ethical and moral aspects, remembering also the importance of reviewing our concepts, starting with the Scriptures. Often the ethical, moral concepts were forced upon us by centres of power rather than by the oppressed. He recognised the significant role of the UN but believed it was also a victim of a globalisation process which tended to make it a body in which powerful countries had special privileges; it should also review its internal structures in order to find new ways of working efficiently. He believed that, on the basis of our Christian faith, we should go on analysing and studying the meaning of globalisation for the world in which we live.

Metropolitan Chrysostomos spoke of the contrast between the Western point of view as shown in the General Secretary's interpretation of globalisation, and that of the East which was quite different. For example, in the East there was a spiritual mission, while in the West there was a colonial mission which later became a Christian one. In the East conversion came by means of the spiritual life, while in the West it took place by force. He warned that the new order being put forward by some in the West, aiming at the hegemony of great powers oppressing smaller nations, would not be acceptable to the Orthodox.

General Secretary's Response

Responding to some of the comments, Dr Raiser agreed with Mr Allsop that there was a danger of polarisation but he did not feel that a call to dialogue was sufficient to counteract it. Dialogue should not be seen as a means of avoiding conflict - there must be some conflict.

He agreed with several speakers about the need for continuing emphasis on Africa and assured participants that this was an essential part of preparations for the Harare assembly.

On the issue of militarism and the arms race, Dr Raiser noted that the WCC had earlier done considerable work on this, and he hoped the Programme to Overcome Violence would help to sharpen our view in that direction.

He assured those who spoke about historical references that the fact that they had accepted the need to reappropriate the history of the church in its early phase as a continuing source of exploration but also of warning, meant that he had achieved his aim.

Responding to Metropolitan Chrysostomos, Dr Raiser explained that he had wanted to say that the early Christian community of the first three centuries, essentially Eastern, had found a response to what at their time was a process that could be compared to globalisation today. Now we have drawn on their inspiration, we want to learn again from the spiritual insight hidden in the development of early Christian conciliar life and conciliarity. He believed that this was the core of an ecumenical response to the challenges of globalisation today.

In response to Metropolitan Kirill, Dr Raiser acknowledged that he had not mentioned the decision of the Georgian Orthodox Church to withdraw its membership of the WCC, and assured him this was indeed a source of deep regret. The Moderator would however refer to it in his report.

He explained that after receiving the news of the decision by the Georgian Orthodox Church, he had discussed the situation with Jean Fischer of the Conference of European Churches, and they had decided to ask Prof. Papaderos of the Orthodox Academy in Crete to visit the Patriarch and the Holy Synod of the Georgian Orthodox Church on behalf of both WCC and CEC; he provided a full report about his visit. In light of this, Dr Raiser had addressed a letter to the Patriarch assuring him of the continuing readiness of the WCC to assist and to be supportive in the present difficult situation, while respecting the conditions that led the Holy Synod of the GOC to decide to leave the World Council of Churches.

Secondly, the Moderator himself had taken a very deliberate initiative to facilitate dialogue with our Orthodox member churches and their leaders in order to appreciate better how the WCC could be of assistance in what was a very critical and difficult situation in the Orthodox Churches.

Regarding the Russian Orthodox Church, Dr Raiser had offered to visit Moscow in order to learn more about the present situation and to discover how the WCC might be able to assist. Unfortunately it had been impossible to agree on convenient dates prior to this meeting of CC, but he hoped a visit could be arranged before long.

II. Report of the Moderator²

As was customary, the first part of the Moderator's report described the work of the Executive Committee since September 1996 (recorded in the minutes of its meetings of February and September 1997).

In the second part, he spoke about the present juncture in the history of the ecumenical movement; the situation in the Orthodox world and the problems which have manifested themselves in different ways in different countries. He then went on to give his views on the Common Understanding and Vision process, identifying some of the inter-connected issues. The Council had reached a point where it had to act in a more careful, responsible and serious manner. Therefore it was important to see some of the problems facing it in a realistic perspective. The Moderator laid emphasis on the reality of the church as the people of God; the church was its institutional expression. But the Church was more than that: the Church was the living body of Jesus Christ! This reality was often marginalised in the life of our churches.

On the question of ecclesiology: the Church as the people of God meant that ecumenism must be people-oriented. It was a basic affirmation to say that the churches need the WCC. Some may emphasise the importance of certain aspects of the WCC but the Moderator believed that all the churches would say that the existence of the WCC was a must. On the basis of that and in light of CUV, he went on to spell out certain questions in relation to the CUV process, mentioning some of the reactions received from the churches.

The CUV text stated that "a council of churches is a fellowship of churches" and spoke of the WCC as a privileged instrument of the ecumenical movement. How could these two realities be understood in their complementarity, rather than in their tension or contradiction? And on the concept of fellowship: what did it mean to be part of this fellowship? That varied according to the views held by different churches. How could this reality be

² The full text appears in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol.49, no.4, 1997

dealt with? There was a need for coherence and integrity both in WCC and in the context of the relationship of collaboration between the WCC and REOs, NCCs and other ecumenical partners.

Humility was essential if we were to recognise our limitations and shortcomings. Sometimes we expect too much from each other, as well as from the WCC. But as churches we have our own shortcomings, so we should practise some realism - which is the source of humility. We need efficient structures, and we need to emphasise the global role of the WCC.

On the question of "ethos", the Moderator believed this would be part of the Council's continuing discussion: it was not something that could be resolved through meetings. So he was raising the issue with the reminder that it should form part of the Council's agenda in the future. Further, he urged the Orthodox to take the Council more seriously and participate more actively in its life and witness.

In the last section of his report, the Moderator spoke of how we live with and in spite of our differences: it was important to listen to one another more carefully and responsibly; to learn to tolerate our differences. We need to learn more from each other rather than teach each other. The ecumenical movement challenged us to be together, which implied mutual understanding, mutual correction, mutual growth. Regarding the majority/minority issue, the Moderator did not believe it was possible to solve this before or even after the Assembly. Nevertheless it was necessary to discuss it in view of the growing frustration around it, and the need for realism. He referred to the model on which the Middle East Council of Churches was based - the model of the family. It worked there but he did not believe it was applicable to the WCC. Rather it was necessary to deepen our reflection and be more realistic.

It should not be necessary in this fellowship to settle matters, especially controversial issues, by voting: this did not do justice to the nature of our fellowship. Rather, we have to build up a process by which we can deal with critical issues by some kind of consensus. He had raised this question in the expectation that the new Central Committee would look at it more carefully

The Moderator summarised the basic message he wished to convey:

- 1) The CUV process was the right one to take the Council towards the 21st century confidently and responsibly. Therefore the Central Committee must appropriate it and be part of that process. Members would have varying reactions, and some may wish to propose modifications, but the substance of CUV must be appropriated by the WCC and the member churches.

2) The Council's ecumenical partners both in the WCC and outside it were urged to follow more carefully what was going on in the Orthodox world: they should listen to the Orthodox in a more responsible way, and be open to providing more space for Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement in general and in the WCC in particular.

3) At the same time the Moderator called upon his Orthodox brothers and sisters to take both the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches more seriously, and to participate more actively by being ready always to listen to others and learn from them.

Discussion

Speakers expressed appreciation for the openness of the Moderator's report and took up a number of the points he raised.

Regarding the Moderator's concern about the lack of participation of the Orthodox Churches in some aspects of the life of the WCC, Fr Chaplin agreed that this needed broadening. But he felt that one of the reasons why this participation was limited was that many programmes and fields of WCC activities did not meet the needs and wishes of the people of God including the Orthodox family. Many positive initiatives were coming from grassroots Orthodox which could be met by the WCC in such a way as to help other parts of the world to become more familiar with the Orthodox way of life, and with Orthodox concerns about the future of the world. Many Orthodox felt that the globalisation process was more an attempt to create one universal political system; they prefer to keep their own systems - not known in the West - and do not wish to be subject to the political aspirations of others.

Dr Kässmann said that, as a protestant, she had already learned a great deal about the Orthodox through her experience in the ecumenical movement. On the issue of democracy, she pointed out that this was not the rule of the majority at the cost of the minority; the minority should be involved as well. Power should not be used to suppress the views of minorities. In recent years this sort of attitude had been shown towards the Orthodox and she found it difficult to understand for example the reasons behind the withdrawal of certain Orthodox Churches from ecumenical discussions.

She believed the Council demonstrated hopeful signs of wider participation, and hoped that the Moderator's report would offer opportunity for members to speak openly about difficult issues.

Dr Patelos referred to the issue of unity which must always be seen as the

raison d'être of the WCC. He hoped that, with the approaching 50th anniversary celebrations, some material would be available from Faith and Order to help the churches take stock of how far they had come, and to look in an honest and self-critical way at the situation as it was today.

He agreed that it was not possible to separate issues of faith from those of social commitment. In the study he had done in the 1970s on the Orthodox presence in the WCC, he had opted to see the Orthodox as a family, and he felt this view would help to avoid misunderstandings in the future. The WCC had always been needed and would continue to be needed in the future.

Dr Granberg-Michaelson agreed with the warning that the Council was too much identified with structures and programmes and saw this as one of the central issues to be addressed in the CUV process, though he was aware that it would be difficult in view of the tendency to proceed along the same ways as in the past. The divisions in the structure of the ecumenical movement were not found in the same way in the churches, although many churches were themselves experiencing new difficulties and divisions.

He had appreciated the new way of relating together as experienced in the meeting called by the Moderator in Antelias (Beirut, Lebanon) in December 1996, which he saw as a sign of what a future working style for the WCC might be. It had offered opportunity for open dialogue and interchange, which was not necessarily the case in other ecumenical meetings.

The Council's decision-making procedures should be on the agenda for the future; it was important that they not be perceived as divisive for Orthodox and Western Protestants. There was a tendency to become too accustomed to debate and deliberation rather than discernment, and he hoped in the future that fundamental questions about the nature of our fellowship and how we engage in processes of discernment and decision-making would be addressed clearly.

Archbishop Peers saw a great deal of hope in ecumenism, but not necessarily in institutional ecumenism. Things were happening in the churches that bridged the gaps where people were divided by language and religion. He commended the Moderator for holding up the different tensions that exist but felt that many of these were inevitable. The choice was between talking with one another or about one another.

In relation to the domination of meetings and documents, the Archbishop stressed the contrast between meetings and meeting. Meeting did not

necessarily mean going to meetings. Fourteen years after the Sixth Assembly, he still met people in Vancouver whose lives were changed by that event, but they were not the ones who attended the meetings or wrote the statements and reports. One of the challenges the Council must face was the question of how to meet without it becoming a "meeting" in the sense in which the Moderator was using the word, and he hoped Harare might be a step in that direction.

Reflecting on the General Secretary's reference to the difficulties with the legitimacy of the political institution in light of globalisation, and the Moderator's assertion that the ecumenical movement does not exist outside the churches, Dr Bakkevig felt that it was important to find ways and means of getting beyond the antagonism between movements and institutions and find new ways of expressing ourselves, where we include both the concerns which are behind the movements and the concern for stability and continuity which an institution can give. A way must be found for talking about these issues together, involving all the people of God.

Bishop Talbert noted the Moderator's call for the Council to be open, but at the same time he indicated that some issues should not be discussed; he asked for more clarity about what the Moderator meant here. He believed that in God's house nothing was too controversial to talk about because we were bringing it to the one place where we could talk to each other about it and in our own processes decide on which direction to go.

Bishop Lavrentije was grateful for the Moderator's emphasis on democracy of which he had but little experience, and there were some things in democracy that he failed to understand. He cited an example of Serbian Orthodox migrant workers in Western Europe: in the period before the Bosnian conflict it was possible for the Serbs to find magazines and books in their own language all over Western Europe, but now nothing was available to them. He appealed to the WCC to take some action against this kind of discrimination and denial of simple human rights.

Moderator's Response

The Moderator expressed gratitude to those who had participated in the discussion of his report, regretting there had not been time to hear all who wished to speak. He saw these responses as reaffirming what he had said, for this had come out of his experience of the WCC especially over the past six years.

To Fr Chaplin, he pointed out that the Orthodox did not participate in some of the programmatic aspects of the WCC because these did not meet their

expectations - but that was precisely why the Orthodox should participate! How can one criticise if one does not participate? We were not here just to observe and sometimes to contribute, but to participate.

The issue of democracy was a difficult one and the Moderator was glad that Dr Granberg Michaelson had said this was not just an Orthodox concern but one that was experienced in most of our churches. Exploring new models of conciliar procedures, being together, reflecting and acting together in the Council should come to the fore in our discussions.

He assured Dr Patelos that Unity remained the *raison d'être* of the WCC, but we had reached the stage where unity, mission and evangelism, must be taken in their inter-relatedness without jeopardising the identifiable identity of unity. That must stay at the heart of the ecumenical movement.

The Moderator thanked Archbishop Peers for reminding Central Committee of the distinction between meetings and meeting; he agreed that it was important to meet often outside our meetings.

Responding to Dr Bakkevig on the question of tensions and the paradoxical situation between institutions and movements, the Moderator reiterated that movements needed structures in order to exist, and the church was no exception. Thus the movement character of the ecumenical movement must be maintained and spelled out, as must the fellowship character of the Council. How can this tension between institution and movement be maintained?

The Moderator assured Bishop Talbert that he was in favour of open space, and that this must be provided in the life of the WCC. But that space must be characterised by mutual responsibility and sensitivity. Certain problems could be solved in our churches because they pertained to the churches, but others could not be solved there and the advice and views of others was needed. Within that open space the necessary interaction must be established. What he could not accept was the kind of open space where we come with our agendas and try to impose them on others. A distinction must be made between these two. We need space to enter into creative interaction, the kind of space which helps us grow together and does not divide us.

He was not against consensus and agreed that wherever possible we should work towards it. But we should not insist on moving towards a consensus which could create contradictions and tensions - this might jeopardise our fellowship. We have to live with our differences and accept each other.

III. Response by the Central Committee

At a later session, Ms Gcabashe presented the report of the General Secretariat Committee, summarising the Unit Committees' views on the Reports of the General Secretary and the Moderator.

1) The GS Committee received comments from the Units on both reports, and made the following observations on the General Secretary's report:

- Appreciation was expressed for the comprehensive report which set vital issues before us in a straightforward manner. The presentation on globalisation evoked considerable comment and appreciation for the comprehensive analysis of its positive and negative aspects. The need to continue to develop a common definition which draws from perspectives in different parts of the world was affirmed, as was the view that globalisation had positive potential for evangelism through communication systems and a prophetic ecumenism. While Christ had been the first to "globalise" the Gospel, we were now seeing a "new globalisation". Committee members particularly welcomed references to the profound impact of globalisation, citing one result as the decreasing capacity of institutions to respond adequately to the aspirations of their constituents.
- Concern was expressed about financial contributions by member churches and the consequences regarding subsidies for representatives from member churches to attend the Eighth Assembly. Questions were also raised about contributions in kind, such as the hosting of WCC meetings, and how such contributions could be spelled out in financial statements.

2) The following observations were made on the Moderator's report:

- The challenge placed before the Central Committee by the Moderator was appreciated. While we need an "ecumenism that matters", the Moderator also reminded the body that the "Council does not take any decisions nor does it advocate apart from the churches". Many discussed the strength of ecumenism as bringing a perspective that is more than any one church can see on its own and which looks to the places where ecumenical witness within the Council can be mutually challenging.
- Discussions highlighted particular sections of the report. Many appreciated the drawing up of the Common Witness document which was helpful in working toward stronger ecumenical partnership. Witnesses and proselytism were concerns of all branches of the church and there

were calls for further studies of these issues, such as basic questions of "What is ecumenism?" and "What is fellowship?" at the regional level. Many desired greater clarity in identifying the specific places where our fellowship in the WCC is under stress.

- The Moderator's comments on Christian ethos were welcomed. There was a clear need to find alternative ways of working and of incorporating the full participation of all member churches in the life of the Council and in its decision-making processes. Cultural differences that are reflected in the procedural practices need to be studied. The lack of ecumenical formation was seen as one major reason for the perceived crisis in ecumenical affairs, in that the passion for ecumenical work was not being passed on to the next generation nor were the ecumenical voices of others being heard.

In light of these discussions, and of the Unit reports, the GS Committee recommended, and the Central Committee **agreed**:

- a) *to receive the reports of the General Secretary and of the Moderator with appreciation and commend them to the churches as they prepare for the Eighth Assembly;*
- b) *to request that the Executive Committee design and implement a procedure for conducting a dialogue on the Orthodox Churches' participation in and contribution to the life of the WCC; this dialogue should be initiated before the convening of the Eighth Assembly;*
- c) *to instruct the Executive Committee and staff to provide clear and unmistakable signs that the issues of the working style, ethos, and decision-making in governing bodies of the WCC, including those matters raised in the Moderator's report, were being seriously engaged, so that specific proposals may be passed on to the new Central Committee following the Eighth Assembly.*

[Note: In receiving these reports, the Central Committee embarked on a further full discussion of some of the issues raised. This is reported on under the Report of the Committee on the General Secretariat, pp. 84-87]

PUBLIC ISSUES

At a plenary session on 13 September, the Moderator invited Dr Aaron Tolen, moderator of the Public Issues Committee (PIC) to present its first report.

A draft memorandum and recommendations had been prepared on **Nigeria**; also a draft statement on Sudanese Church Leaders' Initiatives for Peace in **Sudan**, and a draft minute on Sanctions against **Iraq**. The CCIA staff had prepared extensive background-notes on these issues, as well as information on a number of other international affairs concerns.

Considerable discussion ensued, in particular with reference to **Nigeria** and the follow up to the WCC Report of 1996 entitled "Ogoni - the struggle continues". Participants had received a copy of the response by Shell International to the WCC's report, together with a copy of the WCC's rejoinder. A dialogue between WCC and corporate officers of Shell had also taken place.

Several members of the Central Committee indicated that they had been approached by Shell officers in their own countries with respect to the announced decision to discuss the Nigeria situation at this meeting. Some participants expressed concern that the WCC report had been issued in the first place without discussions having taken place with Shell, since it was clear that Shell felt it had been misrepresented in the report. In response, Dr Tolen pointed out that, while Shell figured prominently, the report was about a visit to victims of environmental destruction and repression in Ogoniland. It had accurately reflected the testimonies gathered.

The fact that the dialogue with Shell was continuing was welcomed and encouraged; similar conversations were also taking place in a number of countries between Shell and church representatives. Ms Rantakari proposed that a message of greeting be sent by Central Committee to the meeting currently underway in Finland among the Ogoni, Masai and Sami indigenous peoples.

Bishop Stephen (Methodist Church, Nigeria) appreciated the WCC's concern and the action taken regarding the Ogoni situation. He underlined the complexity of the situation and noted that many questions remained to be resolved. He drew attention to the role played by the Nigerian government, pointing out that Shell could not do business in the country without

government support. So the government itself was also to be held accountable. The churches in Nigeria were trying to establish a dialogue to seek ways to resolve the conflict.

Others felt there should be stronger reference in the draft text to the suffering of the Ogoni people, and what was happening to them. Specific actions needed to be taken to support them in their struggle for justice.

As Nigeria was a rich country in terms of natural resources, it was suggested that a clause be included urging the government to develop other resources to reduce dependency on income from oil. The question was also asked: what did the government do with the revenue it received from the oil business?

Dr Tolen responded that the comments would be taken into account in revising the text. Mr Epps spoke further about the discussions that had taken place with Shell, pointing out the different perspectives brought by churches and by business corporations to issues such as these.

Responding to the criticism that the WCC had not checked its facts before publishing the report, Mr Epps explained that an independent consultant had been invited to review both the WCC report and Shell's response. A few factual errors were found but nothing which detracted from the substance. The WCC had welcomed the fact that Shell was introducing new business principles and ethical standards, and their application should be kept under review and discussed in the continuing dialogue.

Regarding the draft statement on **Sudan**, Rev. Samuel Ador (Sudan Council of Churches) asked participants to pray for his country and its churches as they made efforts towards a settlement of the conflict. There was considerable concern among the churches that the Khartoum Peace Agreement of April 1997 was being manipulated by the government for its own interests, and being used as a tool to further the war, particularly in the south of the country. They believed this Agreement was only partial and not comprehensive enough to bring peace. He therefore called on the international community to continue its advocacy and to ensure that all parties to the conflict come to a cease fire and a comprehensive peace agreement.

Several suggestions were made for additions to the minute on **Iraq**, but it was pointed that the purpose of a minute was to give instructions for work to be done on the issue that would be developed into a public statement at a later stage. The points made had been noted.

In concluding the PIC's first report, Dr Tolen noted that a request had been received for a statement on the situation in Sierra Leone. The suggestions had been accepted that a letter be sent to the President of the Diplomatic Conference on Landmines currently taking place in Oslo, Norway, and that a pastoral letter/message of solidarity be sent to the churches in Jerusalem.

A second plenary session on **Public Issues** took place on 17 September. The Moderator called on Dr Tolen to present the second report of the PIC.

Dr Tolen said that drafts of the requested letters had been given to the Officers. He then read the revised texts on Nigeria, Sudan and Iraq, identifying the changes made in response to the earlier discussion in Central Committee. In response to a request, a statement on the situation in **Sierra Leone** had also been prepared. The Central Committee **adopted** these texts as follows:

I. MEMORANDUM AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON NIGERIA

1. Nigeria is one of the richest and most powerful African nations. This proud land provided some of the most gifted leaders to the movement for African independence from colonial rule, and key architects of the rule of law and standards of governance embodied in the Charter of the Organization for African Unity and in the African Convention on Human and People's Rights.. Today it is most often cited as an example of official corruption, abuse of power, systematic violation of the rights of its people and economic mismanagement.

2. After bright beginnings when it gained independence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria has been almost constantly governed by the military. Successive *coups d'état* have so eroded the democratic constitutional framework of governance put in place at independence that the people has been left without legal recourse against the misdeeds of their powerful military masters. The hopes of Nigerians and of the international community were raised when internationally-monitored presidential elections were held in June 1993 and Chief Moshood Abiola was elected by popular ballot. Those hopes were yet again dashed when the military again took power under the leadership of the present ruler, General Sani Abacha, the elections were annulled and Chief Abiola imprisoned.

3. The present government has abolished virtually all the basic freedoms

of the Nigerian people. Political opposition has been suppressed, trade union activities banned, freedom of the press severely curtailed, and citizens' right to independent courts of law systematically denied. Nigerians have been rendered defenseless and live in constant fear of repressive military and police forces.

4. The execution in defiance of massive international protest of Ken Saro Wiwa and eight other leaders of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in November 1995 drew attention to the particularly dramatic situation of Ogoniland. A joint World Council of Churches and All-Africa Conference of Churches team visited this region and published a report of its interviews with victims of environmental destruction and brutality by the Nigerian security forces.

5. These testimonies focused attention on the operations of international petroleum companies in Ogoniland and especially on Shell International Ltd., the main partner in the oil consortium, criticizing it in particular for its part in environmental destruction and for its collaboration with the military regime. Since the publication of its Ogoniland report, Shell officers have been in dialogue with the WCC on the findings of the report and other matters related to corporate responsibility.

6. Shell and other companies point out that, as private business enterprises, they remain outside the political structures of the country and cannot be held accountable for the actions of the government. Yet the fact that revenue from oil production accounts for some 80% of Nigeria's Gross national Product, and some 90% of its export earnings, shows that oil companies have considerable influence and potential for helping to create conditions for a return to a just democratic order.

7. In light of these considerations, and in support of the churches of Nigeria, the Central Committee, meeting in Geneva, 11-19 September 1997,

7.1. *Calls insistently upon the Government of Nigeria* to respect the results of the June 1993 presidential elections;

7.2. *Notes the stated intention of the Government of Nigeria* to restore civilian rule by 1 October 1998;

7.3. *Calls upon the Government of Nigeria* to advance that date and to proceed immediately with the transition and to complete it without

further delay by reinstating full democratic freedoms;

7.4. *Calls for* the initiation of a fully participatory national dialogue in Nigeria to elaborate a new constitutional framework for governance which places the military firmly under civilian control, assures fair ethnic and regional representation in government, establishes an equitable sharing of revenues and guarantees fundamental human rights:

7.5. *Draws attention* to the fact that the consortium of international petroleum companies, in which Shell International Ltd. is the major partner, provides the principal source of foreign export earnings for Nigeria, and therefore has considerable potential for helping to create conditions for the restoration of democracy;

7.6. *Notes with dismay* the accusations that these companies have been responsible for severe environmental devastation in Nigeria and that they have cooperated with Nigerian military and police forces in the repression of the civilian populations in areas where they carry on operations;

7.7. *Welcomes* the dialogue undertaken by Shell International, Ltd. with the WCC and several of its member churches and related agencies with respect to its corporate responsibility for environmental protection and the consequences of its operations for the population of the areas where they are carried out;

7.8. *Calls upon Shell International, Ltd.* to extend this dialogue to include open and direct discussions with the churches of Nigeria, free from government or other restraints;

7.9. *Urges Shell International, Ltd.* to negotiate in good faith with the freely chosen representatives of the Ogoni people and with representatives of civil society organizations in other parts of Nigeria with respect to its corporate responsibilities in that country, including reparations for environmental destruction for which it is responsible;

7.10. *Considers that* the health of corporations is not to be judged on profit alone, but by the ethical standards applied in the pursuit of business;

7.11. *Welcomes* the elaboration by Shell International Ltd. of a new "Statement of General Business Principles", and the commitment it has

undertaken to support fundamental human rights, and *calls upon* the WCC and its member churches, especially the churches of Nigeria, to monitor closely the implementation of these policies and principles;

7.12. *Urges all international oil companies active in Nigeria* to review their operations in Nigeria with respect to their environmental and social impact, to use their influence with the Government of Nigeria to promote full respect for human rights and democratic freedoms, and if their initiatives are ignored, to withhold their cooperation from the Nigerian Government until such time as the rule of law is restored, effective protections for human rights are established, and a civilian government freely chosen by the people is firmly in place;

7.13. *Calls upon member churches, related agencies and councils of churches* to keep the situation in Nigeria under close review and to advocate with their governments the withholding of economic, military and other cooperation with the Government of Nigeria until such time as full democratic rule is restored and the military is placed under effective civilian control;

7.14. *Requests member churches, related agencies and councils of churches* to inform the WCC of their actions in this respect and on the results of further dialogues they may undertake directly with Shell International Ltd. and other members of the international oil consortium in Nigeria;

7.15. *Encourages the churches of Nigeria* in their witness for human rights, justice and peace in Nigeria through interfaith efforts with the followers of Islam and in cooperation with civil society organizations in a common effort to restore democracy, good governance and respect for the equality and human dignity of all Nigerians;

7.16. *Assures the churches of Nigeria* of the prayers and active support of the WCC as they assume the burden of costly discipleship.

II. STATEMENT ON SUDANESE CHURCH LEADERS' INITIATIVES FOR PEACE IN SUDAN

1. The war in Sudan has continued unabated since it was rekindled in 1983. Since then, over three million people have lost their lives, five million have been displaced inside the country and another five hundred

thousand have been forced to seek refuge in neighboring countries, especially in Kenya and Uganda. The World Council of Churches has responded by providing humanitarian relief assistance to the victims, and has remained in contact with all the parties to the conflict. Through visits and consultations, it has endeavored to promote a just and lasting solution.

2. The Sudanese churches, acting in the framework of the Sudan Ecumenical Forum, are increasingly overcoming the separation imposed between them by the war, and are forging an important new witness for peace. Shortly after the last meeting of the WCC Central Committee, church leaders from North and South Sudan met in Morges, Switzerland (September 1996). Confessing that their divisions had weakened their ability to serve as agents of peace and reconciliation, they expressed a new determination to make common cause to stop the war and attempt to mediate a peace settlement. The position paper they developed together, "Here We Stand United in Action for Peace", has since been presented by church delegations to the faction leaders in the South and to the Government of Sudan in the North. On each occasion, their initiative has been welcomed. This position paper has also been shared with churches in Africa, the Middle East, Europe and North America, and constitutes a solid basis for broad ecumenical advocacy for peace in the Sudan.

3. The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, 11-19 September 1997:

3.1. *Warmly welcomes* the resolve of the church leaders in North and South Sudan, as expressed in their position paper, "Here We Stand United in Action for Peace", to stop the war and to promote dialogue for peace among the armed factions in the South and between them and the Government of Sudan;

3.2. *Calls attention to* the principles elaborated by the Sudanese church leaders upon which a just and meaningful peace in Sudan must be built:

- freedom of religious expression, worship and witness
- open participation of all in political, social and economic life, irrespective of racial, ethnic, social or religious background
- openness to trusting dialogue between alienated political, social and religious groups within society
- acceptance of cultural, linguistic and social diversity

- resolution of political and social conflicts by peaceful means
- resolve to steadily widen the effective participation of all people in decision-making and the political process;

3.3. *Urges* WCC member churches, and particularly those which have direct links with the Sudan, to continue and intensify their efforts to encourage and support the unified peace initiatives of the Sudan Council of Churches and the New Sudan Council of Churches;

3.4. *Calls for* an immediate cease-fire among the warring factions in the South and by the Government of Sudan as essential to creating a climate conducive to serious discussions among Sudanese at all levels for a peaceful end to the conflict;

3.5. *Further welcomes* the joint statement of Sudanese Church leaders following the signing of the Khartoum Peace Agreement of 21 April 1997 by the Government of Sudan and the leadership of the SSIM (South Sudan Independence Movement) and four other rebel factions, in which they state that:

3.5.1. this Agreement could contribute to peace, but only if it were opened for broad discussion among all the people of Sudan and especially with the leaders of other opposition movements; and

3.5.2. if such dialogue is not forthcoming, this Agreement could become an instrument of manipulation that could lead to an escalation of the conflict and prolong the suffering of the Sudanese people;

3.6. *Notes with concern* that before such dialogue has taken place, the leader of SSIM has accepted to serve in a ministerial post of the Government of Sudan, thereby jeopardizing the possibility of making the April 1997 Agreement one which could enjoy the support of all parties;

3.7. *Reiterates its conviction* that any lasting peace for Sudan must be negotiated with the support of the partner states in the region gathered in IGAD (the Intergovernmental Authority for Development);

3.8. *Urges all parties*, their supporters abroad, and those seeking to assist in the achievement of a negotiated peace, to support the resumption of the IGAD Peace Process, to cooperate with it, and to place their various initiatives within the framework of the IGAD Principles.

III. MINUTE ON SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAQ

The WCC Central Committee has been reminded during this meeting of the suffering of the civilian population of Iraq and of the deteriorating situation, mainly as a result of the continuing application of UN Security Council economic sanctions.

The "Oil for Food" Resolution adopted by the Security Council in 1995 (Res. 986), by which Iraq is allowed to sell limited quantities of oil to provide humanitarian relief for its people, has finally been implemented this year. Much of the revenue thus produced, however, goes not to relieve the plight of all Iraqi citizens, but rather for defraying costs related to the Gulf War and the maintenance of UN Observers in their country. Only a fraction of the needs of the people are being met. Recent on-site investigation by UN specialized agencies and NGO's have warned of the consequences, especially for the children, of allowing the humanitarian situation of most of the Iraqi population to deteriorate further.

The Central Committee therefore *requests* the International Affairs staff to undertake a study of this particular situation in the light of the WCC "Memorandum and Recommendations on the Application of Sanctions" adopted in 1995, and that an ecumenical visit be paid to Iraq to meet with the churches and others affected by the situation. The results of this study and a report of the visit should be brought to the WCC Executive Committee meeting in early 1998 for further consideration and action.

IV. STATEMENT ON SIERRA LEONE

1. After years of fratricidal fighting in Sierra Leone between the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the government of Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was democratically elected in March 1996. On 25 May 1997, junior military officers staged a violent military *coup d'état*, overturning the civilian government and forcing President Kabbah to seek sanctuary outside the country.

2. The new Armed Forces Revolutionary Council formed a new government with the RUF, isolating the Kamajor (civil defense) units loyal to President Kabbah.

3. The coup was condemned by the people, churches and Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone, the states of the region, the OAU and world-

wide as a set back to democratization process in the country and in Africa as a whole. The military set-back suffered by the ECOMOG (Monitoring Group) contingent sent to Sierra Leone by ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) emboldened the coup leaders who subsequently declared that they will retain power for the next four years.

4. The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, 11-19 September 1997:

4.1. *Profoundly regrets* that the positive results of the efforts undertaken since 1996 for a peaceful settlement of the internal conflict in Sierra Leone were reversed by the military coup of 25 May 1997;

4.2. *Condemns once again* the use of violence by the parties to the conflict which has inflicted great suffering and loss of lives of the civilian population;

4.3. *Gives thanks to God* for the courageous and resilient efforts of the churches in Sierra Leone and of the Inter-Religious Council to mediate the present dispute and to promote constructive dialogue for peace;

4.4. *Supports the churches of Sierra Leone* in their call for the immediate initiation of dialogue among all the parties to the conflict seeking a return to democracy and the restoration of the constitutional civilian government;

4.5. *Supports* the peace-making efforts of the churches in the region through FECCIWA (Fellowship of the Councils and Churches in West Africa);

4.6. *Calls upon WCC member churches and related agencies* to continue and strengthen their advocacy for a negotiated solution to this crisis and to respond generously to appeals to help meet the pressing needs of the thousands of displaced people;

4.7. *Requests* the General Secretary to send an ecumenical team as soon as possible to the churches of Sierra Leone as a sign of encouragement and support to them in their costly witness for peace;

4.8. *Assures the churches and people of Sierra Leone* of the prayers and solidarity in this time of trial.

Before closing the session, Dr Tolen expressed thanks to members of Central Committee for entrusting him with the privilege of being moderator of the Public Issues Committee during the period since Canberra. He expressed appreciation to the CCIA staff for the supportive role they had played which had helped the PIC and Central Committee as a whole to take informed actions on the many complex and urgent issues confronting the world and the churches in this time.

The Moderator added his personal thanks to Dr Tolen and the staff as well as to all who had taken part in the work of the Public Issues Committee in the period since Canberra.

TOWARDS A COMMON UNDERSTANDING AND VISION OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

His Holiness Aram I presided over two plenary sessions on 13 September devoted to the presentation and full discussion of the documentation related to the Common Understanding and Vision process, including the following:

- *Our Ecumenical Vision*
- *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC - basic text*³
- *Internal Structural Implications of the CUV document*
- *Programme and Management Structure for the work of WCC - a Proposal* (see Appendix III to these minutes)
- *Issues related to WCC Governance*

I. Presentation of Documents and Discussion

Rev. Eunice Santana presented two documents - **Our Ecumenical Vision** and the **basic CUV text**. She recalled that the CUV process had been on this Central Committee's agenda from the beginning (1991), though at that point it was not clear what form the product of the search for a "common understanding and vision of the WCC" would take. Later on it was decided to focus on preparing a text for the Eighth Assembly that might serve as an "ecumenical charter" for the 21st century, and as a basis for a recommitment by the churches to their ecumenical calling and to the WCC.

³ The basic CUV text as approved by Central Committee is available in brochure form from WCC General Secretariat. See also Appendix IX: Documents available on request.

She then described the process employed in the period until November 1996 when a "working draft for a policy statement" was distributed in pamphlet form to member churches and ecumenical partners, with the request to send their comments and responses to the WCC in Geneva.

At its meeting in September 1996, the Central Committee asked the General Secretary to work with the Executive Committee to develop an alternative structure for the programmes and management of the Council. A small group of Executive members was asked to accompany both the process of revision of the CUV text and the development of this new structure.

At its meeting in February 1997, the Executive Committee decided that the proposals concerning future governance of the Council be dealt with separately from the main document.

Over the following months, some 150 responses were received from churches and ecumenical partners; these formed the basis of the revision of the text which was carried out by the small group of the Executive in July and circulated to members of Central Committee. All responses received were studied carefully; despite their diversity, they all attested to a profound ecumenical engagement and commitment to the WCC on the part of member churches and partners.

Ms Santana went on to indicate the most significant changes made to the text on the basis of the responses. First of all, the statement "Our Ecumenical Vision", which replaced the preamble to the earlier version, had been separated from the main text since it was not a policy document but was seen as a basis for worship services for use by member churches in their celebrations of recommitment to the ecumenical movement, and by the Assembly at Harare.

Moving to the basic text, Ms Santana referred to the revisions made, chapter by chapter, noting that no document could cover every point that everyone believed to be important. She hoped that discussion, both in plenary and in Unit Committees, would focus on addressing issues of substance rather than matters of wording; despite the complexity of some of the issues, the main aim was to produce a text that was clear and acceptable.

A record was kept of the comments made in the ensuing discussion and shared with the small group of the Executive which meet several times during the course of Central Committee to deal with additional amendments and proposals for revision. A revised text was brought to plenary at a later stage.

At the second plenary session, Rev. Nélide Ritchie introduced the documents on **Internal Structural Implications of the CUV document** and a proposal on **Programme and Management Structure for the work of WCC**. The first of these had already been circulated to Central Committee members, while the second was being presented on behalf of the Executive Committee.

The two documents had provided the framework and direction for follow-up on the proposed structure. Discussions on internal structure had benefited from discussions about the Governance of WCC, from meetings of the Finance Strategy working group and the Finance Sub-committee of the Executive, and from evaluation of activities by staff, experience of the present structure and working of the WCC with ecumenical partners.

A number of guidelines for a possible structure had been drawn up, and the resulting model was suggesting that the WCC move beyond the present unit system to a body which was to be seen as, and which functioned as, one administrative whole. Details of the proposed model were set out in the document (see Appendix III to these minutes).

Ms Ritchie explained that Central Committee was being requested to give **approval in principle** to the directions of the basic model. The General Secretary and staff would work on a more detailed description of activities to be undertaken, within the financial means available, for presentation to the Executive Committee in February 1998.

The year 1998 being the Assembly year was to be considered a transition period to prepare for the implementation of the new operating structure of the Council which should be in place by the beginning of 1999, although a number of changes would be introduced sooner, especially in relation to the area of finance and administration.

In order to put into effect the changes proposed to the internal structure and management, amendments to the Rules and to certain Bylaws of the Council would be required. Such changes should be approved in principle by Central Committee, with the final wording to be adopted by the Executive Committee prior to the Assembly in December 1998.

In discussion, Dr Granberg-Michaelson noted that although there was an intention not to separate programmes and relationships, it seemed that they were indeed still separated. He underlined the need for flexibility, responsiveness, relevance - with open boundaries between the clusters/teams. Yet the document on governance still mentioned commissions and advisory

groups which would presumably be permanent structures; he warned against falling back into the former sub-unit pattern.

He was in favour of the proposed Ecumenical Forum as a way of bringing together the fragmented parts of the body of Christ into a new grouping: could this not be a priority for the future?

Dr Page asked for more information on the work of the Programme Committee and how it would be appointed. She had the impression that the role of Central Committee members who were not on either the Programme or the Finance Committees would be unclear, making it even more difficult to convince small churches that it was important to continue to support one of its members on Central Committee.

Msgr Radano was appreciative of the fact that the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity had been invited to participate in the CUV process; it had duly sent its response which had been warmly received.

On the question of commissions, Msgr Radano was concerned about Roman Catholic participation in the Faith and Order Commission. The PCPCU had cherished its involvement in Faith and Order since 1968; this had allowed for full participation with WCC member churches and had been very important for the RCC as a non-member church. He wondered what the restructuring would mean for the Faith and Order Commission and urged that its work be carried forward in a clear manner.

Secondly, he believed the ecumenical movement needed strong programmes both in regard to issues of JPIC - engagement in the world - and to Faith and Order, in view of the historical tension between the two. He hoped it would be possible to carry forward an integrated ecumenical movement into the new millennium, giving attention to work on the churches' engagement with the world and to the search for visible unity.

Dr Love also believed that relationships and programme were inter-related, and affirmed in particular a clear focus on relationships if this meant that the WCC would understand its constituents better.

On the question of governance: Dr Love stated that it was important to legitimate the reality that in fact the Executive Committee had taken over responsibilities previously exercised by Central Committee. It would be good to increase the function of Central Committee and its engagement to build its agenda on the experience and preoccupations of individual churches, groups

of churches and regions. She underlined the need to be cautious about what responsibilities were delegated by Central Committee to the Executive and to ensure that authority stayed where the greater amount of participation was possible. She believed that a single administrative structure would prevent the Council from being pulled in divergent directions.

Dr Love had a doubly held conviction that the process around the way decisions were made in the WCC was bound up with the quality of the outcome achieved. In 1991 a process was put together that was different: she asked that that process be thought through in order to give to Central Committee full possibility to be involved in shaping decisions.

Since these proposals were being suggested for implementation in January 1999 - immediately after the assembly - what was the role of the assembly in setting directions for the future? asked Ms Welch. She regretted that no further process of consultation with the member churches was envisaged, and suggested that the present proposals be sent to the churches for their further consideration. The Council was at a critical stage and must have the backing of the churches in the years to come.

Ms Welch was also concerned about the proposal for an Ecumenical Forum, which she saw as a moving away from being a council of member churches, introducing an element of diverting the WCC from the churches rather than strengthening the churches in their responsibilities.

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On behalf of the Executive Committee, Dr Nababan then presented the document on **Issues Related to WCC Governance**, noting that work on this process would need to continue after the Assembly.

Mr Allsop saw much that was new and exciting in these documents, and there many aspects that he wished to affirm. But he had difficulty moving to the stage of giving "approval in principle" because there were fundamental inconsistencies between structure, process, culture and design. It must be understood that the management function would be different: facilitating styles of management were needed, not a controlling or bureaucratic type of management. Staff should not be involved in drawing up these changes except as a resource for those working on it from outside. It was essential to break away from the present and grasp the future.

Other points made in discussion included the following:

- In the past there had been a tendency to act quickly and then to discover the problems; this time action should be taken only after careful consideration in order to avoid creating new problems;
- Issues of justice, racism, sexism should be highlighted more. Since 1968 the WCC used the justice issue as a pivotal point but these proposals fell short of the impact that the issues of social justice, PCR and JPIC have had;
- It would be helpful to have a more popular version of the texts available which would be more acceptable to the average lay reader;
- The text **Our Ecumenical Vision** must be exciting, inviting, inspiring - yet it seemed flat, neutral, abstract and remote from our source. It should mention the fact that Christians worship together, not just dialogue;
- Jesus Christ called us to share, to love one another as he loved us: this laid a big responsibility on us. Many secular bodies do similar work but the WCC needs to find a new way of relating; people are more important than issues;
- *Koinonia* is a keyword for the future ecumenical movement. Ecclesial ecumenism, fellowship of churches, our common calling, were all part of koinonia;
- On the concept of conciliarity, conciliar fellowship: where was conciliarity? Should the concept be revived or could it be left aside and forgotten?
- The ecclesial and ethical dimensions of WCC as an organisation should be integrated in the whole structure; there was need to be more flexible with a polycentric approach to ecumenism. The changing situation presents a challenge to show a clear sign to local churches of a strong commitment to koinonia.

The General Secretary indicated that the CUV sub-group of the Executive Committee (hereinafter referred to as "the sub-group") which had monitored the process so far and on whose behalf the documents were presented, would do a first assessment of what had been heard and the consequences to be drawn. It would then transmit suggestions for the discussion process in the Unit Committees.

Secondly, he felt it would be helpful to see whether any additional revisions to the Constitution and Rules would be necessary. The Officers proposed the following group of persons to work on this: Bishop Anderson (moderator), Dr Larsson, Ms Santana, Dr Tsetsis, Dr Park. This was **agreed**.

II. Recommendations for Action

A. At a business session on 18 September Dr Nababan, presiding, invited Bishop Zacharias to report on behalf of the sub-group of the Executive Committee; the group had evaluated the comments made in earlier discussions on the document *Our Common Vision* and on the basic CUV text and was proposing a number of recommendations for action.

1. Bishop Zacharias reported that no changes were being proposed to the document **Our Ecumenical Vision** for three reasons:

- the language used in making such a commitment together should be imaginative, inviting, using vivid images; this would not result when subject to amendment by a large group;
- this was a working document to be passed on to those preparing worship materials and other texts for the assembly; it was not for adoption by CC;
- it had been suggested that this text might form the basis or outline of the Message of the Eighth Assembly; if so, its final form should reflect the context and experience of the Assembly itself.

2. Changes were however being proposed to the basic text **Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC**. Bishop Zacharias spelled out the rationale for these proposals, and explained that the sub-group had not felt able to accept all the proposals for changes received.

A number of additional amendments to the wording were then proposed and accepted (and subsequently incorporated into the final text of the document as circulated to member churches and ecumenical partners in pamphlet form).

Other amendments from the floor were not accepted, including the following:

Dr Blei wished to re-word a sentence in the paragraph on the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC, stating that: *"The fellowship of the WCC is limited by the absence of the Roman Catholic Church"*.

The General Secretary noted that this point had been the subject of considerable discussion: some wished to strengthen the positive tone while others wanted to maintain the present wording. At this stage the amendment could not be accepted by the sub-group.

The amendment was **lost** (45 votes against, 33 in favour, and 12 abstentions).

Metropolitan Chrysostomos pointed out that the Orthodox did not have authority to speak for their churches with regard to changes of wording: that could only be done when the text was finalised. Dr Raiser appreciated the concern, but stated that the changes proposed did not in his view constitute fundamental changes to the character of the document but should be seen rather as adjustments.

Dr Nababan invited Central Committee to vote on the proposed changes to the text one by one. All were **approved**.

3. Bishop Zacharias said that the sub-group further recommended that a **Preface** be added to the document. With some amendments, the Central Committee **agreed** to the draft text for this Preface.

4. Bishop Zacharias went on to report that the CUV sub-group was proposing the following *recommendations regarding the process and documents Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC*, as follows:

- *that the separation of the Vision text and the basic document be maintained;*
- *that the Central Committee adopt the basic text, as revised by the CUV sub-group of the Executive Committee, as a policy statement in fulfilment of various earlier mandates regarding the process "Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC" initiated by the Central Committee in 1989;*
- *that the Central Committee commend the revised policy statement to the member churches of the WCC and other ecumenical partners for study and action;*
- *that the Central Committee transmit this statement to the Eighth Assembly as part of its report to the Assembly of "the actions it has taken during its period of office); (WCC Rules, V,5,e).*
- *that the Central Committee urge the WCC General Secretary and staff to seek ways to disseminate this document widely and to encourage its use in continued discussion among churches and ecumenical partners of their common ecumenical understanding and vision.*

Mr Schmaly proposed that the words "a policy statement" be replaced by "a reference document". The sub-group was not in favour of this, and Dr Tolen,

a member of the sub-group, pointed out that the objective of the Central Committee's work had been to arrive at a policy document - it would be a backward step if this were only to be seen as a reference document.

The motion was **lost**.

Mr Schmaly proposed adding an additional recommendation: "that the Central Committee encourage the further development of this text, taking into account the comments and recommendations made at this meeting".

Both Dr Tolen and Dr Best spoke against this proposal: it was time to acknowledge that a proportion of the work on CUV had been accomplished.

The motion was **lost**.

The Central Committee **voted in favour** of the above recommendations.

5. Regarding the text **Our Ecumenical Vision**, Bishop Zacharias indicated the sub-group's recommendation: that the Central Committee:

- commend the text "Our Ecumenical Vision" as a basic working text to be used by those preparing worship and other materials for the recommitment of the churches to the WCC and the ecumenical movement in the context of the Eighth Assembly;

- encourage the further development of this text, taking into account comments and recommendations made in this meeting and using concrete and fresh images which draw as appropriate on biblical language and differ as necessary from the language used in the present text;

- ask the WCC staff, in consultation with the Assembly Worship Committee, to bring a revised version of this text to the Executive Committee in February 1998 for final approval and eventual wider distribution.

The Central Committee **agreed** to the above recommendations.

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B. Bishop Talbert then presented the report of the sub-group of the Executive on **Internal Structural Implications of the CUV process and a Proposal for a Programme and Management Structure** for the work of the Council, noting that these provided the framework for implementing the process.

The sub-group had noted with satisfaction that all reports received from the Unit and General Secretariat Committees and the Finance Committee acknowledged the basic principles and general directions of the proposed model and appeared to support the overall thrust of the restructuring. All comments and suggestions would be available to the process of follow up as details of the new structure were developed and presented to Executive Committee meetings in February and September 1998. Comments received covered the following areas:

- specific editorial and linguistic suggestions;
- concerns about the division into clusters and the possibility of a fall back to independent units or separate sub-units;
- the suggestion that greater cohesion and prominence be given to the clusters on Issues and Themes, and on Relations. The inseparable interrelatedness of these two clusters was stressed. The clusters on Communications and Finance, Service and Administration could be seen as being of a different character from the main functional clusters;
- the value of the four areas/clusters was appreciated as different dimensions of the life and work of the WCC, and the importance of strategic planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation was stressed as an essential function of the General Secretariat to emphasize the integrated nature and desirability of the one administrative whole;
- some concerns were mentioned about the final location of a few activities and whether it was advisable to rotate team leaders.

The sub-group further noted that work must be done on the final proposal and its implications, taking into consideration the comments and feedback from this Central Committee; this would be done immediately after this meeting. The Assembly year 1998 would be considered a transition period to prepare for the final implementation of the model in January 1999. A number of features forming part of the new structural model were expected to be introduced soon after this Central Committee (the new management structure and organization of the area of finance and administration). Other aspects would be initiated as appropriate in consultation with the Executive Committee in order to be ready for 1999 when the new structure should be functioning.

In discussion, concern was expressed at the shortage of time available to discuss these recommendations which were of major importance for the future of the WCC. But it was felt that Central Committee must address the issues itself and not leave the task to the Executive Committee.

The General Secretary indicated that 21 changes had been recommended by the Unit Committees, of which the majority posed no problem and could be accepted by the sub-group. On a few areas of concern however, it had been felt wise to seek the advice of Central Committee. Dr Raiser went through these changes/amendments proposed by the Units, most of which were accepted by Central Committee without discussion.

There was some debate with regard to the place of Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) within the structure: should it be attached to the team on Education and Ecumenical Formation, or to the team on Church, Communion and Renewal? Another question related to Lay Participation Towards Inclusive Community: should it be placed in the team on Education and Ecumenical Formation, or in Church, Community and Renewal?

Unit Committees had raised the question as to whether a distinction between the concern for issues and themes, and for relationships and constituencies, was a wise one.

On behalf of Unit III, Dr Kässmann noted that the Unit's experience with "Living Letters" and the Programme to Overcome Violence had led to the conviction that it was difficult to separate programmes from relationships. The Unit therefore wished to propose a change in regard to the clusters, as follows:

"that the proposed structure consist of three clusters of staff teams in the areas of: (1) issues, themes, relationships and constituencies; (2) communication; (3) finance, services and administration".

This was seen as a major change and provoked considerable discussion.

Dr Best did not see issues and themes as being separate from relationships but rather as linking and intercepting. She was not in favour of the amendment.

Dr Bakkevig pointed out that much of the Council's work on issues/themes was in fact work on relationships, and vice versa. Unit III felt the separation was artificial and had only been maintained in the present structure because it was not clear administratively how they belonged together. It was a question of good leadership rather than a question of principle.

Mr Allsop spoke in favour of the proposal since it took up the principle being affirmed for the new structure - that the Council be more integrated and

flexible, avoiding the temptation to return to the unit structure of the past.

Dr Granberg-Michaelson felt that such a move would put an impossible burden on the Deputy General Secretary who was to oversee the work of the teams, although it would be a big step forward towards achieving the one administrative whole.

The Moderator felt that the original recommendation had been reached through a process of discussion over a period of time. With respect to the proposal from Unit III, he did not believe it should be voted on without time for careful consideration. All the Council's work was inter-related - no line could be drawn between programme, themes and relationships. The intention was the same - to achieve a coherent whole, but was this the most efficient way to reach that goal? Whatever decision was made by Central Committee would have to be implemented by staff, so he asked the General Secretary for his reaction.

While appreciating the concern expressed by Unit III, Dr Raiser said that for him the four clusters represented four inseparably related dimensions of the Council's work, not simply functions. In presenting this report to Central Committee, the description of each team tried to show that each of the issue teams included relationships. But under relationships, it was clear that those teams had to be involved with the thematic and issue-oriented work. He hoped that a model could be found in which these four dimensions were represented by persons who considered themselves trustees with the task of seeing that their particular dimension was not lost in the shaping and development and evaluation of the Council's activities; such trustees were needed for the thematic tasks as well as for relationships which were crucial for the whole approach in the CUV process.

The Central Committee **voted against** Dr Kässmann's motion.

Dr Love was anxious that some record be made of Unit III's debate on this matter and proposed the following motion:

"In order to keep programme and relationships in a creative and mutually enriching dynamic, the Central Committee requested the Executive Committee to monitor the allocation of work between the cluster on issues and themes and the cluster on relationships and constituencies, in order to make adjustment where necessary."

The Central Committee **agreed**.

Bishop Renz wondered whether certain points ought not to remain open: should not Education - theological education, adult education - be put together again to work jointly? He believed that for the sake of freedom, the model should remain as flexible as possible so that adjustments could be made in the future as necessary. The new Programme Committee could be involved here.

Fr Apostola also thought the Programme Committee might be the place to discuss these issues. He was concerned that, while four clusters were proposed, the one on issues and themes covered 70% of activities, while the other three clusters would cover only 30%. Yet the four directors of clusters would have equal authority.

Secondly, Fr Apostola pointed out that the proposal separated the two main aspects that the stream on Lay Participation Towards Inclusive Community had been endeavouring to bring together - the laity, and persons with disabilities. The recent consultation on the *Laos* had wanted to take the notion of laity outside education and formation, to see it as the ecclesiological issue that it is and bring it back into a theological discussion on what the laity means. If laity were placed under Education, the entire theme might be lost.

Similarly, putting the issue of people with disabilities under Justice, Peace and Creation could imply that it was an issue of rights rather than a spiritual and theological one. Fr Apostola urged Central Committee to think carefully about the place of these two issues within the new structure.

Regarding ETE, as mentioned in the Unit I Committee report, Fr Apostola believed that all sections of Education should be placed together. And if that were so, it would seem logical for Bossey also to be in the same cluster.

Bishop Talbert then presented the recommendations of the sub-group:

1 that the Central Committee

- *express appreciation for the work done by the General Secretary and staff in consultation with the Executive Committee and others on the proposed "Programme and Management Structure" for the work of WCC (Appendix III), and*
- *approve the outline of the new structure as presented and amended and*
- *affirm in particular the basic thrust and directions of the model where importance is given to integration, cohesion, flexibility, responsiveness and emphasis on WCC as one administrative whole;*
- *affirm that, in the final selection of activities undertaken, the WCC be guided by the principle of what is unique for a global fellowship to take*

up and to do effectively;

- suggest that efforts be made for a cooperative style of work where WCC explores avenues of partnership with others in the ecumenical movement;

2 that the Central Committee

- recommend that the General Secretary and staff take into consideration the comments and feedback given by the Central Committee on the proposed model and develop this structure further;

- recommend that a more detailed document covering an outline of the structure, the tasks, the teams and the functioning of WCC be presented to the Executive Committee in February 1998: this should be the basis for a broad unified budget for 1999;

3 further, that the Central Committee

- recommend that the General Secretary, after this Central Committee meeting, initiate a strategic coordinated and integrated planning process in the development of the detailed model and the necessary systems for its functioning that brings together the reorganizing of activities, staffing, finance and structure in the light of the generally accepted direction and policies of the CUV as outlined in Our Ecumenical Vision and the basic CUV text;

- suggest that the Executive Committee accompany this process as appropriate and monitor it at its meetings in February and September 1998; it was important to ensure that the Harare Assembly have input in the final priorities and thrusts of WCC for 1999 and beyond;

4 that the Central Committee

- encourage the General Secretary to keep Central Committee members, churches and ecumenical partners informed about the main developments in the changes of the structure and functioning of WCC and to welcome suggestions and comments on the proposals.

The Central Committee **agreed** to all of the above recommendations.

Bishop Talbert expressed appreciation that members of Central Committee had engaged in the process and taken a positive decision with regard to the CUV process. The General Secretary affirmed that in approving the outline of the new structure the Central Committee had provided the direction that had been sought. He gave assurance that the concerns expressed by CC members would be taken seriously, and that the Executive Committee would continue to monitor the process.

Dr Nababan indicated that the section dealing with amendments to the WCC Rules would be taken the following day in order to observe the 24 hour notice period.

III. Proposed Amendments to the Constitution

At a business session on Friday 19 September, Dr Nababan, presiding, invited Bishop Anderson to introduce the report of the small group appointed by Central Committee to consider constitutional amendments in connection with the text on **Issues Related to WCC Governance**.

Bishop Anderson explained that five areas had been identified where amendments to the Constitution and/or Rules should be considered. He presented the proposed wording of these amendments for consideration and eventual action by Central Committee. The Executive had recommended that Central Committee give approval in principle to the amendments with the understanding that the language would be checked for consistency by a constitutional expert and that the final wording would be approved by the Executive Committee in February 1998. Subsequently the proposed amendments to the Constitution would be circulated to member churches following the procedure set out in Art. VII of the Constitution.

The following explications of the suggested amendments were based on responses from the Unit Committees:

The first proposal referred to the **Presidents** of the WCC. Responses from Unit Committees showed there was no unanimity about continuing the office of President nor on the mode of their election. There appeared to be a majority in favour of continuing the present pattern providing for up to eight Presidents. While some were prepared to maintain the practice of election of Presidents by the Assembly, there was strong support in favour of shifting that task to the Central Committee. However, the sub-group was suggesting that the Presidents be included in Central Committee as *ex officio* members.

The second and third proposals referred to the **functions of the Central and Executive Committees** respectively. The language of the suggested amendment presupposed that the Central Committee remain the central governing body of the WCC and that the Executive Committee be held accountable to Central Committee. Within the policies adopted by the Assembly, the Central Committee would be responsible for initiating and terminating programmes and for setting priorities for the work of the Council. In this task it would be

assisted by a Programme Committee.

The Central Committee would also be responsible for electing committees, commissions and boards, and for providing for the organizational structure of the Council. It would retain the constitutional authority for approving the Council's budget. The Executive Committee would be responsible for overseeing and monitoring the **ongoing** programmes and activities of the Council. This proposal would clarify and legitimate the practice which had developed in recent years. The powers of the Executive Committee would remain limited to implementing policy established by the Central Committee.

There was general agreement among the Unit Committees with the proposal to establish a **Programme Committee** of Central Committee. Like the Finance Committee, it would be a standing committee. The recommendation spelled out its composition, function and accountability to Central Committee. The list of functions included an explication of the character of commissions, boards and advisory groups, all of which would be advisory to the Programme Committee and would not be involved in supervising or directing the work of particular staff teams.

Commissions would be advisory bodies whose mandate concerned areas of constitutional responsibility of the WCC. The assumption emerging from the discussion in the Unit Committees was that there should be commissions in the areas of Faith and Order, Mission and Evangelism, International Affairs and Education. The committee did not feel, however, that these specific provisions had to be included in the Rules, but should be left to the decision of the new Central Committee. (The present Rules did not mention any particular commission, board or working group.)

With regard to *Boards* - a body with a distinct management responsibility - only the Board of the Ecumenical Institute was mentioned in the Rules. Currently, other boards - ENI, ACT, and ECLOF - were outside the authority of the Central Committee.

Advisory groups would be strictly advisory to the Programme Committee. The Unit III Committee was making a strong plea to provide for advisory groups for Women and Youth. The final decision should be left to the new Central Committee after the Assembly.

The report of the Assembly Planning Committee included recommendations for the amendment of Rule IV 5 a) regarding the Business Committee of the Assembly and of Rule XVI 7 regarding new business or change of the agenda.

of the Assembly. These recommendations, together with an action on the proposed amendment to Art.III of the Constitution (Purposes and Functions of the WCC), would have to be integrated into a comprehensive document regarding amendments to the Constitution and Rules of the WCC which should be submitted to the Executive Committee in February 1998 for final clearance. Subsequently the text should be sent to members of Central Committee for their information.

Bishop Anderson then went through the amendments one by one:

- **Amendment 1:**

Constitution - Article V. Organisation 1. *The Assembly* ...

c) The Assembly shall have the following functions...:

Proposal: to delete point c) 1): "**to elect the President or Presidents of the World Council**" and to place it under Article V. 2. *The Central Committee c) 1)*

A number of members spoke in favour of each of the two options: whether the Presidents should be elected by the Assembly or by Central Committee.

The question of whether the Council should continue to have Presidents at all was raised. Many felt that, if so, they should be elected by the Assembly because it gave opportunity for a wider constituency to be involved, since many churches were not represented on Central Committee. Others felt that the painful debate around the election of Presidents at Canberra should be avoided at all costs, and therefore favoured the election taking place in Central Committee.

The Central Committee **voted in favour** of the election of Presidents being transferred to the responsibility of the Central Committee instead of the Assembly, by 54 votes in favour, 30 against, 10 abstentions. It was noted that the vote at the Assembly must attain a two-thirds majority (which was not the case here).

- **Amendment 2:**

Article V. Organisation, 1. *The Assembly*, c) 3)

Proposal: in 3), to add the word "**overall**", to read:

3) to determine the **overall** policies of the World Council and to review...

The Central Committee **agreed**.

- **Amendment 3:**

Article V. Organisation, 2. *The Central Committee ... b)*

Proposal: to **replace** present text of b) by:

b) The Central Committee shall be composed of not more than 150 members.

The General Secretary pointed out that the Central Committee was composed of members chosen from among the delegates to the Assembly, which was not the case for the presidents who would not normally qualify for CC membership. Subsequently the Central Committee was given the authority to elect presidents who would be declared to be *ex officio* members. Clarification would be needed as to whether this implied that they had the right to speak but not to vote, or the right to speak and to vote.

Bishop Gerny stressed the importance for small member churches of having a seat on Central Committee, otherwise they lose an important source of contacts and relationships with the ecumenical movement. In order to protect the right of minorities he proposed *that each denomination which is a member of WCC has the right to have at least one seat on the Central Committee.*

This led to some discussion on representation of denominations as opposed to member churches on Central Committee: clearly it was not possible for all 330 member churches to be represented, but several member churches could be found under one denomination. Yet denominations had no legal status within the WCC. Dr Bakkevig called for a more detailed discussion on this issue at a later stage - it was too important a matter to be dealt with in haste.

Dr Nababan ruled Bishop Gerny's motion out of order in the present debate. The Bishop accepted the ruling but stressed that minority churches should be protected and that a way be found to achieve this.

Bishop Anderson reminded participants that the question was whether it was necessary to make an amendment to indicate that the presidents would be *ex officio* members of Central Committee.

Fr Apostola moved that to point 2.b) above be added: *.. "and such ex officio non-voting members as may be provided for below"*.

Dr Nababan proposed an amendment to the amendment, that point b) read: *"The Central Committee shall be composed of not more than 150 voting members"*.

The Central Committee **agreed** to this amendment, but was **not in favour** of Fr Apostola's motion quoted above.

The Central Committee **agreed** to the wording of point 2.b) as amended.

- **Amendment 4:**

Article V. Organisation 2. *The Central Committee*

Proposal: to *add* under 2. Central Committee, additional point c) 1) to **elect the Presidents of the World Council of Churches.**

Mr Lodberg **moved** that this proposed point c) 1) *to elect the Presidents of the World Council of Churches* be **deleted**.

His reason for suggesting this was that Central Committee members represent the assembly rather than their member churches and should be accountable to the decisions made by the assembly. Some members of Central Committee were scarcely involved in the core work of the Council, partly because the presidents took up some of the responsibilities that they might carry.

Bishop Zacharias pointed out that the question was not whether there would be presidents; the debate was in relation to the mode of their election.

Mr Lodberg's motion was **lost** by 47 votes against, 21 in favour, and 18 abstentions.

Returning to Amendment 4 above, Ms Welch underlined the need to have an open process of consultation for bringing names forward. Instead of "elect" she proposed saying "*appoint*" in order to signal a broader process as opposed to a more competitive method implied by "*election*".

Ms Welch's motion was **lost**.

The Central Committee **voted in favour** of Amendment 4 above.

- **Amendment 5:**

Article V. Organisation 2) *The Central Committee*, c) (former 3) 4)

Proposal: to **add** the word *commissions*, to read:
c) 4) *to elect committees, commissions and boards.*

- **Amendment 6:**

Article V. Organisation 2. *The Central Committee*

Proposal: under 2. c) 5) (former 4)) to add the words underlined:

5) within the policies adopted by the Assembly, to initiate and terminate programmes and set priorities for the work of the Council.

The Central Committee **agreed** to these two amendments.

The General Secretary pointed out that the Rules distinguish between Commissions (to be appointed by Central Committee) and Advisory Groups (to be appointed by the Programme Committee).

Dr Page stressed that such responsibilities could only be fulfilled if Central Committee were given sufficient time to make counter-proposals.

- **Amendment 7:**

Article VI. Other Ecumenical Christian Organisations, point 1.

Proposal: to replace "world" by "international", to read:

1. Such world confessional bodies and such international ecumenical organisations...

This would bring the Constitution in line with a change already made in the Rules on International Ecumenical Organisations, as distinct from Christian World Communions (cf. Rule XIV).

The Central Committee **agreed**.

- **Amendment 8:**

Constitution - Article III

Proposal: to **replace** by a new text (below) Constitution Article III:

Purposes and Functions of the WCC.

The General Secretary explained that the Purposes and Functions of the WCC had been carefully studied and revised for inclusion in the basic text of the Common Understanding and Vision document. No proposals had been received from member churches concerning further revisions of this text.

Dr Nababan noted that two amendments were being proposed, viz:

add word - "...to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship.."

add phrase - "nurture relations with and among churches, especially within but also beyond its membership;"

These additions were **agreed**.

The full text of the Constitution - Article III on **Purposes and Functions of the WCC** would thus read as follows:

"The World Council of Churches is constituted by the churches to serve the one ecumenical movement. It incorporates the work of the world movements for Faith and Order and Life and Work, the International Missionary Council, and the World Council of Christian Education.

"The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.

"In seeking koinonia in faith and life, witness and service, the churches through the Council will:

- promote the prayerful search for forgiveness and reconciliation in a spirit of mutual accountability, the development of deeper relationships through theological dialogue, and the sharing of human, spiritual and material resources with one another;
- facilitate common witness in each place and in all places, and support each other in their work for mission and evangelism;
- express their commitment to diakonia in serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, promoting one human family in justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation, so that all may experience the fullness of life;
- nurture the growth of an ecumenical consciousness through processes of education and a vision of life in community rooted in each particular cultural context;
- assist each other in their relationships to and with people of other faith communities;
- foster renewal and growth in unity, worship, mission and service.

"In order to strengthen the one ecumenical movement, the Council will:

- nurture relations with and among churches, especially within but also beyond its membership;
- establish and maintain relations with national councils, regional

conferences of churches, organizations of Christian World Communions and other ecumenical bodies;

- support ecumenical initiatives at regional, national and local levels;
- facilitate the creation of networks among ecumenical organizations;
- work towards maintaining the coherence of the one ecumenical movement in its diverse manifestations."

The Central Committee **approved** the Purposes and Functions of the WCC as amended.

IV. Proposed Amendments to the Rules

In the interests of time, Bishop Anderson suggested referring the proposed amendments to the Rules to the new Central Committee for action, since the Rules would not be legitimated until the Constitution had been amended by the Assembly.

Mr Allsop felt that some discussion should take place in the present Central Committee. In particular he proposed that the name "Programme Committee" be changed to "**Planning and Coordination Committee**" which would be a more accurate description.

Bishop Rogerson believed it would be helpful if this Central Committee could indicate whether it believed these amendments to the Rules were in the right direction. Others were also of the opinion that this CC had spent considerable time and energy on this task and should have opportunity to complete it.

Bishop Anderson withdrew his proposal and took up the **Amendments to the Rules**.

Several amendments had been sent in writing to the officers, and others were proposed from the floor.

On the question of whether or not the presidents should have the right to vote, a straw vote showed that this was not the desire of the majority.

Staff were requested to work further on the proposed changes and bring them back for approval at a later session rather than delaying the process until it could be taken up by the new Central Committee.

At a later session, Dr Nababan read the following motion from Dr Park Jong Wha, who proposed that

the Central Committee:

"in view of the time limitation, and for the sake of consistency and the effective implementation of the CUV process, mandate the Executive Committee to act on the proposed amendments to the Rules prior to the Assembly, as far as they correspond to the competence of the Central Committee; further, that it recommend that the Executive take seriously into account in its actions the comments and new proposals made by this Central Committee."

The Central Committee **agreed**.

The full report of the CUV sub-group of the Executive Committee was **received** with appreciation.

DELIBERATIVE PLENARY SESSIONS

I. "LIVING LETTERS" and SOKONI/THEOLOGY OF LIFE

Unit III presented its reports on the mid-Decade team visits to member churches - "Living Letters" - and on its Commission meeting reporting on the Sokoni/ Theology of Life in two plenary sessions which flowed into one another. In both processes the focus had been on listening to the churches and challenging them to action in their own local reality. Both processes had focused on a practical expression of theology; both had followed the same methodology of listening to local experiences and discovering the commonalities; both opened the space for mutual challenge and encounter.

The purpose of the plenaries was to receive the final report of the Decade team visits and to forward it to the churches for follow-up and action; to reflect on the Theology of Life process and affirm this way of doing theology ecumenically; to reflect on the implications of the lessons learned and insights gained in the Theology of Life process and the Decade for the ecumenical movement and the WCC.

Bishop Anderson, presiding, introduced the session. Then came a poetic call by the Kenyan poet, Bantu Mwaura, who had played a prominent role in the Unit III Commission meeting in Kenya in January 1997 when the Sokoni experience was first used by WCC as a methodology for describing the Theology of Life process. He helped recreate the spirit of "Sokoni" through his poetry, story-telling and the sounds of drums.

1. Presentation of the Decade Report

a) A poem, "The Women's Journey", written by Irja Askola (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland; CEC Secretary for the Ecumenical Decade), published in "Living Letters"⁴, was read by Musimbi Kanyoro, stewards Kaleen O'Connor, Caroline Wang Nku and Wagner Barros Texeira, and youth adviser Kenneth Whyte.

b) Four persons who had participated in team visits shared stories and experiences emphasising the major issues emerging from the Decade process: Dr Janice Love (USA), Mr Robert Shantz (Canada), Ms Priyanka Mendis (Sri Lanka), and Rev. Hector Mendez (Cuba).

Reference was made to the Decade Festival to be celebrated in Zimbabwe just prior to the Eighth Assembly. Although it was to be seen as the culminating point of the Decade, it did not imply that the work was over - it would serve as a new point of departure for work that must go on being done together, starting from the churches and reaching more and more people everywhere.

c) The session concluded with the challenge to listen and a call to commitment to action through a story recounted in dramatic and musical form by Bantu Mwauru.

2. Presentation on Sokoni / Theology of Life

The story of Sokoni, the enlarged Unit III Commission in Nairobi, Kenya in January 1997, was recounted by Ruth Abraham (Ethiopia) and Roger Williamson (UK) in conversation.

They described scenes that had a particular impact on them as individuals and on others present: Ruth recalled being moved by refugee women from the Sudan playing out their own lives with their children. For her, the most vivid thing was the contrast of coming to Central Committee after Sokoni. There had been some concern about the Sokoni methodology - the fact that there were no documents, that people sat on the floor in circles with a stage in the middle, that there was no door to keep people out - anyone could come and go at any time. It made a great impression. We have to think in more

⁴ see Appendix IX: Documents available on request

creative ways for meeting in the future using non-institutional, non-hierarchical formats.

Roger wondered what was behind the smiling faces of refugee girls from Rwanda: what would they say in the future? Would they say that the churches in the West had had the chance to help heal Rwanda but they missed it by not responding to the appeal made to them? How can our churches be open to the cries of children like these? (cf. *Echoes*, 11/97)

3. Implications/challenges for the ecumenical movement/WCC

Dr Margot Kässmann, moderator of Unit III Commission, gave a reflection⁵ on what the Decade and the Theology of Life meant for the churches in the WCC. Her main points were:

- We have gained a new approach to the relation of local and global;
- We have realised that we have to link methodology and themes;
- We caught a glimpse of what the church might be: a community of lovers of life!
- Doing theology means connecting God and Life, linking God's story and life's story;
- Let us dare to give shape to the vision of an ecumenical earth.

After some time in buzz groups, the floor was opened for discussion. Appreciation was expressed for this style of plenary presentation, while others spoke of their own experiences on team visits. It was stressed that the process had only just begun; many issues had been raised and these must be held before us as we continue efforts to mobilise the churches.

Bishop Anderson closed the session by reminding participants that although the Decade would officially end in 1998, it must go on! And the Theology of Life must bear more fruit! We must continue in the places where we live and serve!

Participants left the hall to the sound of drums from the "four corners of the world".

⁵ Full text available on request from Unit III

II. CONFERENCE ON WORLD MISSION AND EVANGELISM

"Called to One Hope: The Gospel in Diverse Cultures"
 Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, November/December 1996

Participants received an illustrated booklet "Review of the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism", together with a copy of the Conference Message and Acts of Commitment.⁶

Dr Aaron Tolen, presiding, introduced the session which began with a series of colour slides depicting scenes of the event, followed by a brief meditation and prayer used at the Conference. All were then invited to join in singing: *God calls the people now to a new life.*

Dr Tolen explained that the aim of the session was to bring into focus some of the highlights of the Conference on World Mission and to look at some of the ways in which insights coming from the Conference could be deepened.

Four participants then gave brief responses to the question: What did the Salvador Conference mean to me? - Rev. Jorge Domingues, Brazil; Dr Monica Melanchthon, India; Dr Alexandra Johnston, Canada; and Rev. Vsevolod Chaplin, Russia.

The Conference video *Called to One Hope* was then shown, which helped those who had not been in Salvador to get a feeling of the ambience of the programme.

Rev. Carlos Valle, Argentina, general secretary of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) spoke about impulses from Salvador in terms of commitments in mission. He referred to the Conference Message and Acts of Commitment which highlighted several of the issues and challenges faced by the Conference, indicating directions for further reflection and action.

The dominant tone at Salvador was to affirm that the gospel needed to be rooted in all cultures and that, while cultures needed to be opened to the critique of the gospel, they deserved to be treated with respect. In sharing their stories of faith and witness, churches around the world were led to

⁶ Copies available on request from WCC Unit II

discover the richness of the gospel and to take more seriously the contextual theological understandings coming from others.

The process of globalisation now taking place requires a new regard, a new analysis of witness in local situations. How can churches communicate the gospel authentically in contexts that, while local and specific, are nevertheless exposed to one market-driven culture? What can they do with others to counteract the negative forces of globalisation?

On the issue of Mission and Unity: a renewed vision of the ecumenical movement was required to replace old models that were experiencing "ecumenical fatigue". For some, the global search for unity had obscured local values and their place in dialogue. For others, the variety, richness and deep differences in understanding the faith and life of the churches in relation to their mission were no longer expressed. The tendency was to try to satisfy everyone but the result was merely to please the few who retain the power of decision.

The Salvador Conference called participants to look for an ecumenical mission practice that would give a sense of belonging to a real *OIKOUMENE*. It should recognise that we live in a multi-religious and multi-cultural environment that calls for new expressions of witness to the gospel in an attitude of learning and openness; expressions of solidarity with all people in order to make this *OIKOS* the household of God.

A brief discussion followed. Ms Langerak expressed appreciation for the points made and responded to some of the comments. In concluding, she said that written comments, especially those that relate to insights and concerns from a gospel and culture perspective on mission, would be welcomed by Unit II and taken into consideration for future work.

III. WORSHIP AND SPIRITUALITY

Following the first part of morning worship in the Chapel, participants moved to the plenary hall. As the session drew to a close, Jean Vanier gave an interpretation of Christ's example of washing his disciples' feet. He then invited participants to move in silence to the entrance hall, to sit in groups of four and to wash each others' feet.

Rev. Elizabeth Welch, presiding, introduced the plenary session on Worship and Spirituality. She welcomed the students of the Bossey Graduate School

who had just arrived and were making their first visit to the Ecumenical Centre.

Mme Nenevi Seddoh, moderator of Unit I's stream on Worship and Spirituality, welcomed Jean Vanier, founder of l'Arche Community and of the Foi et Lumière (Faith and Light) Movement.

Jean Vanier spoke⁷ of his experience of meeting people with mental handicaps - some of the most oppressed people of this world. He had discovered that what they wanted above all was a friend, someone who would accept them as they were, in their brokenness. This had led to the conviction that he must change himself and learn to think differently from the way his naval officer background had taught him.

He told several moving stories about people who had become part of l'Arche Communities in different parts of the world, and who, in spite of severe handicaps, had an enormous capacity for acceptance, for communication through a smile, for loving people as they are. Living together with people with disabilities, he had touched something in himself - a capacity to enter into communion with people, to love them, to discover tenderness, but at the same time to discover the violence within himself, the desire to hurt people, but still to know that only the truth could set him free. One cannot accept the brokenness of others unless and until one has accepted one's own brokenness. Only the spirit of Jesus Christ can lead each of us to the point of knowing who one is.

Two witnesses - Rev. Dr Wesley Granberg-Michaelson (USA) and Bishop Zacharias Mar Theophilos (India) - responded to Jean Vanier's testimony.

Dr Granberg-Michaelson referred to Jean Vanier's challenge to the ecumenical movement and asked "Can we share our brokenness with one another? Can we share our pain, our divisions, openly with one another?" As the WCC reflected on where it was going on the ecumenical journey, the affirmation was being repeated "We intend to stay together". But if that was the case, we need to hear and learn more about how to pray together with the openness and vulnerability that Jean Vanier shared with us so that we can witness to what we cannot always say but what we know in our hearts.

Bisho Zacharias spoke of spirituality - not merely external piety but life in

⁷ Mr Vanier's full text is available on request from WCC Unit I

purity and humility, loving God and God's creation. Spirituality trusts, calls for community. That was the challenge to the WCC: to call the churches into a community of hope, faith and love, calling the whole of humanity into a community of God's people. In the 21st century, spirituality leads us to diakonia; not to be conformed to the world but to be transformed in the pattern of Jesus Christ - a call for radical change of life-style, of actions and reactions. The WCC has to look for fresh ways - the centrality of Jesus Christ in the whole WCC and in the life of the member churches is the challenge that Jean Vanier has placed before us.

After a short time for reflection in groups, Ms Welch opened the floor for a brief period of discussion.

Jean Vanier then led a meditation on Christ's washing of his disciples' feet. Participants then moved in silence to the entrance hall to sit in groups where they washed each others' feet.

EIGHTH ASSEMBLY

Rev. Eunice Santana, presiding, explained that three plenary sessions were foreseen devoted to various aspects of the Assembly: the Theme, the Context and the Programme. The report of the Assembly Planning Committee would be presented in the third session; Unit Committees were invited to discuss it and share their comments with the General Secretariat Committee which would offer recommendations for action.

I. ASSEMBLY THEME: "Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope"

Presentation and Discussion

Introduction to the Theme

Dr Thomas Best recalled the background to Central Committee's choice of theme, noting that in choosing this theme it had said: this we believe, to this we are committed. We challenged ourselves, the churches, the ecumenical movement, to respond to this cry, "Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope!" It was a complex theme requiring engagement, study and reflection in order to make it come alive and provide inspiration; it must be brought to life, its possibilities explored and developed. This was a crucial stage when the theme must be interpreted and applied to specific situations in all parts of the world.

In looking more closely at the first part of the theme, "Turn to God", two concepts have been especially fruitful: the theme of *memory*, and secondly that of *response in repentance and reconciliation*. Our obedience to God begins with active remembering of what God has done, God's fidelity, God's liberating and loving acts in history. And responding, "Turning to God", results in "turning to our neighbour", expressing the love and compassion which God has shown towards us. Repentance and acts of justice and reconciliation form the second step in "turning to God".

Looking at the second part of the theme, "Rejoice in Hope!": through hope we grasp the future, and see the present in a new way - not in its partial, broken form but in light of God's ultimate purpose for human life and for all of creation, a purpose marked by wholeness, love, and joy. We rejoice in an inclusive hope, which insists that all persons are within the scope of God's love and care. The hope in which we rejoice is a foretaste of the future which God intends for all humanity and for creation. And the Jubilee hope draws us towards the future, the vision of community which God desires for God's people.

Dr Rose Zoé-Obianga based her remarks on the concept of the Jubilee Year as set out in Leviticus 25. Yet there were problems about implementing these extraordinary provisions and it was not clear that a Jubilee Year in fact ever took place.

For Africans, exploited and victims of slavery, this year of Jubilee was an occasion to be celebrated. African women had enthusiastically received the liberating message of Jesus Christ, but the churches still tended to be places where relationships between gospel and culture were difficult to deal with. Women must insist on being given opportunity to participate in the church using the gifts received from God; they had to offer to the church what they were able to do in their work for their own salvation. A year of Jubilee for African women was an opportunity to become aware of obeying God rather than human beings.

The situation in Africa was well known; it was further deteriorating as the debt problem increased. Africans may not understand the issues, but they were aware of increasing poverty in spite of loans, aid, gifts, subsidies, and so on. By entering into covenant with us, God made us free (Nairobi 1975). God cannot set all his debtors free unless we first pardon the debts of those indebted to us.

The Year of Jubilee had two main functions: the emancipation of a Jew who

had become a slave during the previous 49 years, and the restoration of land to the legitimate owner. These demands were reinforced by God's option for the poor. Were we ready to face the consequences of a Year of Jubilee?

A period for reflection in small groups (according to language) followed, then opportunity was provided for reporting back. Some of the main points were:

- How to find the right language to talk about God? Secular leaders (in Latin America) tend to use religious terminology but their intention was different.
- What God are we talking about? We have to find God among the other gods being set up before us. What does it mean to return to God in the context of Jubilee? It was possible to rediscover hope and joy in small things but difficult to make this concrete in practice.
- There is a danger that the church will adapt too much to its context and become subject to what the world requires: at what point does such adaptation become a sin, subjecting ourselves to power structures?
- On Mission: we are sent out to tell the good news to others but we have to start with ourselves in order to be a light for the world; receiving and sending must be kept together: we send out but we must come together again with Christ, that is, we must turn to God.
- In many Protestant churches there is little joy: will Harare help us to rediscover joy and movement again?
- The nuances in the different ways the theme was translated into other languages was noted: in English "turn to God" was an individual act, while in French "tournons-nous vers Dieu" was a collective act.
- Which God do we turn to - God or Jesus Christ? Different approaches need to be spelled out.
- There are different ways of describing "hope" - for some, everything is possible, others can only see secularism and seek for survival.
- Why was the Jubilee Year never put into practice? Because it was beyond human capabilities? We should not forget that we are looking at this theme in a continent which is considered to be without hope.

- For the Russian-speaking Orthodox, the theme is heard in the context of secularism and the "invasion" of western political, economic and religious proselytism. But there was a tendency in the late 19th century for intellectuals to leave the church - so there was another kind of tension due to internal historical factors.
- The theme could also be understood as being multi-directional, an invitation both to individuals and to the churches, societies, to humanity as a whole - and invitation that can be heard in all its aspects and dimensions.
- A warning against speaking too glibly about celebrating a year of Jubilee when we do not have much concrete "liberation" to offer. Mention of Jubilee 2000 in relation to the alleviation of debts: this should also be part of our programme.
- Many people in our societies today are searching for God but they do not turn to the church. We must work to renew our worship so that we have something clear to offer to people.
- You cannot rejoice unless there is peace - with God and with your neighbour.
- The African indigenous churches have much to offer yet little value has been placed on them by the so-called mainline protestant churches.
- The dangers of power and resulting sin of greed means that liberation in Africa is taking place a second time. People still need hope and reconciliation.

II. THE ASSEMBLY CONTEXT

Dr Nababan introduced the session, and invited Mr Densen Mafinyani of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) to speak.

Mr Mafinyani drew attention to the presence of the ZCC's president, Rev. Enos Chomutiri, and on behalf of the Council and its staff and the people of Zimbabwe he greeted members of the Central Committee. The people of Zimbabwe as well as the African churches - the Church in Africa - were looking forward to receiving the WCC Assembly with warm hearts, to celebrate together - an opportunity for the world church to witness after so many years of colonialism and independence.

A video promoting the Assembly, made by the ZCC, was shown.

Ms Rosemary Siyachitema, Secretary of the local Organising Committee, reported on the present stage of the preparation process. The responsibility of her office was to prepare for and help the churches host the assembly.

There were five WCC member churches in Zimbabwe but other churches were also participating enthusiastically in the preparations. The demand for information had been overwhelming, which has led to the setting up of a visitation programme to meet people in churches all around the country.

The assembly theme was being studied in various ways planned by the Theological Committee; Bible Study materials in various languages would soon be available. Financially the local churches were responsible for local preparations and support was coming in from all over Zimbabwe - from the churches and from the community at large.

Since the contract with the university had been signed, local preparations were becoming more intensive, with regular contacts with colleagues at the university. The worship tent would be placed at the central point of the university - The Green - and plenaries would be held in the Great Hall.

A number of questions were asked for clarification.

Responding, Mr Mafinyani explained that for Zimbabwe the Assembly was not only a church event but a national one - the decision to invite the WCC was one in which the government had participated. He affirmed that not only the churches of Zimbabwe but churches from all parts of Southern Africa would be involved in hosting the assembly in numerous ways. Local congregations were being invited to offer hospitality to visitors and many families were willing to do this.

III. 50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

The General Secretary reminded Central Committee that the Assembly Planning Committee (APC) in 1996 proposed that the celebration of the 50th anniversary be linked with an Act of Recommitment, that it be a time to encourage leaders of member churches to be present to represent that recommitment on behalf of their churches. It also proposed that on Sunday 20 September the member churches be invited to join such a recommitment locally so that there would be a world-wide celebration on the same day. This

had found a positive response in a number of churches and councils, who were willing to join in a celebration and use it as an occasion for re-commitment to the ecumenical movement. There had been an encouraging response to the APC's suggestion that the occasion might be used also for a special offering for the work of WCC.

All these plans were however affected by the change of dates. In coming to terms with these implications a new set of proposals had emerged which broadened the framework beyond that one Sunday. It was now proposed to begin with a celebration in Amsterdam on 19-20 September, and have a series of celebrations during October and November culminating in the weekend of 12-13 December in Harare. It would begin by recalling the story, and end by looking forward to the 21st century; begin in an old city in an old country of Europe, and end in Africa in a young nation.

Invitations had been sent to church leaders, although it was recognised that the new dates in December would probably present difficulties for many who will need to be with their communities at that time. Some may therefore find it easier to join in a celebration in Amsterdam than to be present in Harare.

Bishop Engelhardt asked that care be taken to inform the churches well in advance about what was expected of them in terms of this recommitment process to help them prepare themselves. For many churches the WCC is very distant and they will have difficulties to overcome.

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IV. REPORT OF THE ASSEMBLY PLANNING COMMITTEE (APC)

Ms Ritchie invited the Moderator of the APC, Bishop Jonas Jonson, to present the report, as follows:

The Assembly Planning Committee met in Morges, near Geneva, in May 1997. It received and discussed reports from the staff working groups on the planning of different aspects of the assembly and the related events and contributed to further planning and decisions regarding the Assembly programme.

During the meeting a message was received from Harare that the University of Zimbabwe had to rearrange the academic year which made it impossible for them to honour the earlier agreement to offer its facilities for the Assembly in September 1998.

After considerable discussion, the APC authorized the General Secretary, in consultation with the Officers and the Executive Committee, to explore other possible dates to hold the assembly in Harare. The General Secretary was also requested to explore, should holding of the assembly in Harare prove to be difficult, other possible venues, giving priority to maintain the intent to hold the assembly in the African region.

The first part of the APC report was an update on matters on which Central Committee had made decisions and recommendations in earlier meetings, while the second part included the recommendations from the APC for consideration and decision by Central Committee at its present meeting.

Assembly Programme

The APC had further refined the different aspects of the assembly programme and had also worked on the schedule/timetable.

1. Plenary Sessions

The Assembly would begin with worship and an opening plenary on the afternoon of 3 December. The Plenary on the Theme would take place next morning, followed by discussion in small groups. The Reports of the Moderator and the General Secretary would be presented that afternoon, followed by an Open Forum in the evening to explore further with them the issues raised in their respective Reports.

1.1 Theme Plenary

The plenary session on the Theme should seek to provide the focus and coherence for the assembly. The three elements of the theme, identified in earlier discussions, would also form the basis for the treatment of the theme in plenary:

- Recognition of God's goodness - anamnesis;
- Humanity's response in confession- metanoia;
- Recommitment in anticipation - Hope.

Each of these elements would be addressed by a speaker (10-12 minutes each) and the contributions connected by a link person, with two periods for interaction among assembly participants in groups. The presentations should be provocative, imaginative, poetic and presented in brief yet memorable images.

The APC proposed that three lead questions on the different aspects of the theme be sent to delegates with the preparatory materials so that they can be prepared to discuss the theme in the light of the situation of their

churches and the contexts in which they live.

A copy of *The Ecumenical Review* containing articles on the theme and a *Risk Book* on the theme should also be sent to all delegates.

1.2. Decade Plenary

The Decade Plenary, intended to gather the findings of the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, would have four movements;

- The memory: highlighting women's participation and challenge in the history of the ecumenical movement and within the WCC leading to the Ecumenical Decade;
- The present: where we are today in our goal of achieving a true community of women and men in church and in society;
- Repentance: focussing on the need for the churches and the women and men to ask for God's forgiving grace to accompany them; and
- The Anticipation: the challenges for the future.

Symbol: The Decade Festival would use water as the central symbol of the gathering of women. This theme would be continued in the plenary with imaginative use of the Biblical symbolism of water.

Testimonies would be used as means to share immediate experience and to bring, through video clips, some footage of church life into the plenary.

The Plenary would concentrate on the many positive and qualitative changes that have taken place in the life of the churches in their solidarity with women. It would also highlight the issues and challenges that remain and the need to build in the concerns of the Decade into the vision and commitments of the WCC as it looks to the future.

1.3. Africa Plenary

The objective of this Plenary would be to present a realistic picture of the situation with the positive and negative forces at work in its life and history. It would include:

- Where Africa comes from (history);
- Where it is today (some of the contemporary issues)
- Where it hopes to be (looking to the future).

The plenary would seek to correct some of the distorted images of Africa in the media and present the effects of globalization and exclusion on its people. Signs of hope and life would also be presented.

The APC noted that the plenary should not seek to be too comprehensive in the limited period of time available. African issues and concerns should also find expression in other moments in the life of the assembly.

2. Small Groups/ Bible Studies

The Small Groups should function as the “link” or “bridge” between the various parts of the assembly, especially between the worship life and the plenaries. Following the structure of the assembly and the flow of the theme in worship life, small groups would enable participants to share with each other and to reflect on:

- the content and experience of worship;
- the thematic and programmatic presentations made; and
- the implications and follow up of the assembly, both in the WCC and the churches.

Each day the groups would have as primary focus the study of the Biblical passage used in the morning worship, these passages being designed to articulate the theme in its threefold movement. Thus the small groups would echo the flow of worship, helping to relate the worship experience and the biblical message to the assembly as a whole.

The groups would also discuss the content of the preceding plenary, or plenaries. This would provide a second focus for them, offering delegates a chance for discussion of the issues facing the assembly.

On days when there were no plenaries, the groups would, in addition to Bible studies, take up such issues as: responsibilities of delegates and members of Central Committee in promoting the ecumenical vision, reporting to the churches on the assembly, etc.

The APC expressed the wish that, in order to underline the importance of the small groups, as far as possible no other official programme be organized during the time when small group meetings are scheduled.

3. Hearings

One of the constitutional functions of the assembly was to evaluate the work done over the past seven years and to propose guidelines for the work of the WCC for the next seven years. The APC was proposing to accomplish this through a three-step process in the Hearings.

3.1 Hearings for Review and Assessment

Five sets of simultaneous Hearings, each with three sessions, would hear and review the work done by the WCC through its four programme units

and the General Secretariat areas of Relationships, Communication and Bossey. This assessment would be done by the delegates who would have chosen in advance the programme area which they would like to review.

The Programme Guidelines Committee (PGC), divided into five sub-groups, would give leadership to the Hearings process and prepare an assessment as part of the PGC report for action by the plenary of the assembly. Since the Relationships area was also of interest to the Policy Reference Committee, the Hearing on the General Secretariat area would also be attended by members of Policy Reference Committee I.

3.2 Exploring the Issues

The assessment period would be followed by two days in which the delegates would participate in Padare offerings on issues and concerns central to the life of the churches and in many cases prepared by the churches themselves as a contribution to the Padare.

3.3 Hearings to Identify Programme Thrusts for the Future

During a second phase of six sets of simultaneous Hearings, each with three sessions, delegates would identify issues and help to shape the future programme orientations of the Council. The first session would identify and clarify the issues; the second would seek to explore what issues the WCC as a global organization should work on given its structure, financial and staff resources, unique role etc; in the third session the sub-group of the PGC attending the Hearing would test the mind of delegates on the proposals for future work that they had heard during the sessions.

At the end of the Hearings the PGC would prepare a common report, to include the assessment of past work as well as recommendations for future orientation for the WCC. This report would be brought to the plenary of the assembly for discussion and adoption.

4. Padare

Information on the possibility for making offerings at the Padare (seminars, discussions, exhibitions, videos, presentations, etc.) had been sent out to churches and the ecumenical constituency, and by May 1997 nearly fifty organizations and groups had expressed interest.

Criteria as well as a process had been set up for selection and approval of offerings and to supplement those areas in which offerings might not be forthcoming. Umbrella concerns had been identified to cluster the issues-oriented offerings at the Padare.

After discussing the status of those wishing to make presentations at the Padare, the APC recommended the development of an appropriate category along the lines of accredited visitors and day visitors in the Visitors Programme.

Some members of the APC would participate in the review and final screening of the Padare offerings and would also assist in the coordination and management of the Padare at the assembly.

The APC reiterated its earlier decision that Padare offerings should be self-financing.

5. Visitors' Programme (VP)

Registration for the Visitors' Programme would be done in the WCC US Office in New York for North America, in Harare for Africa, and in Geneva for the rest of the world. Inquiries were coming in and the registration process would begin in October.

The assembly theme, *Turn to God, Rejoice in Hope*, would serve as a common thread for the VP. A group was working on the programme for the visitors, seeking to enable their participation at several points in the assembly. Much of the content of the VP would be integrated into the offerings in the Padare, and visitors would attend Padare offerings during the Hearings. Official participants would join the visitors at the Padare when not in Hearings or Plenaries.

A large tent would be erected next to the plenary hall to serve as the central place for visitors and the Visitors' Programme. A large screen in the tent would cover the happenings in the plenary hall for those who could not be accommodated in the plenary hall.

Visitors would be assigned to a "home base" or a "family group" of about 20 persons throughout the assembly.

6. 50th Anniversary and Recommitment

On recommendation of the Office of Communication, the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the WCC and the recommitment of the churches to the ecumenical vision had been moved to the second Saturday of the assembly (originally second Sunday). A survey had shown considerable interest on the part of the broadcasters to carry the event in their Sunday broadcasts, provided the video cassettes were made available on Saturday for editing purposes.

While the assembly would celebrate the event on Saturday evening, the churches around the world would be requested to join this celebration in their Sunday services and through special events at local or national levels. Considerable interest had been expressed in the regions in joining a world wide celebration.

The celebrations at Harare would have three elements: A public meeting to mark 50 years of ministry, including speeches by recognized world leaders on the role of the WCC in church and society; a worship service; and a community event of common celebration.

The 50th anniversary worship service would include commemoration, thanksgiving and proclamation; it would include a core period for broadcast purposes.

The recommitment would be to the calling to be a fellowship of churches in the WCC in the context of the ecumenical movement. The vision statement of the CUV would provide the basis for the recommitment, as well as the commitment made at the first assembly at Amsterdam:

"We intend to stay together and are restless to grow together in unity, according to the wish and prayer of Christ that those who believe in him may be one".

The APC expressed the wish that recognized leadership of the churches be present to make this commitment. At the same time it should reflect the rich regional and confessional diversity of the church and include women and young persons. An appropriate participation of non-member churches should also be explored.

The APC noted that the churches in Geneva and the Netherlands would also hold events to mark the 50 years of the founding of the WCC.

7. Pre-Assembly Events

Plans were underway to prepare the pre-assembly youth event. In May 1997 only 13% of the pre-registered delegates were youth. There was a strong plea from the Youth Desk to use the 15% delegate category to increase the participation of youth, the desired target being 25%. It was hoped that 15% of the advisors would also be youth.

The pre-assembly youth meeting would concentrate on enabling the full and meaningful participation of the youth in the assembly. The Youth

Desk had also set in motion the process to recruit Stewards for the assembly. There would initially be a joint preparatory programme for youth delegates, advisors and stewards, followed by separate orientation for the youth delegates and for stewards.

8. Decade Festival and Pre-Assembly Women's Meeting

The Decade Festival, primarily intended for women, would mark the end of the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. All women delegates were being encouraged to attend the festival. Non-delegate participants at the festival may apply to attend the Assembly as accredited visitors.

The findings of the Decade, including the issues that have emerged and concerns that need immediate follow up, would be shared both in the Hearings and in offerings at the Padare. Care would be taken to emphasise that the end of the Decade should not be seen as the end of the solidarity of the churches with women.

9. Pre-Assembly Team Visits

The APC had decided previously that the pre-assembly visits should concentrate on the South African region with a view to mobilizing the churches in the region for the assembly.

The first of these visits took place in June 1997 in conjunction with the meeting of the Fellowship of Christian Councils in Eastern and Southern Africa (FOCESSA) in Zambia. The next was to Zimbabwe in August 1997 to touch the life of churches beyond Harare in other parts of the country. A comprehensive visit to South Africa was planned for January 1998.

In addition there would be visits by delegates on their way to the assembly, and women-to-women visits in Africa as part of the Decade Festival.

10. Public Relations and Communications

The Office of Communication was implementing the communication plan approved earlier. The various planned pre-assembly publications and audio-visual resources were on schedule. A new assembly flier would be published shortly. Three posters were in preparation. WCC staff were encouraged to use their visits to promote the assembly; for this purpose an information pack had been compiled.

Preparations for the communications operation at the assembly were under way, as were discussions with a number of broadcasting companies on helping to facilitate the coverage of the assembly. A press campaign aimed at both secular and church media would soon start.

Special attention would be given to using fully the potential of the Internet to communicate the assembly worldwide on a daily basis to a broad audience. The "Assembly On-Line" was high on the communications agenda.

New in the communication plan was a WCC Publications' Essay Competition for young people on the topic *Jubilee: the ecumenical relevance of a biblical theme for the Church today*. Invitations had been sent to theological seminaries/faculties, member churches, ecumenical groups, etc. The winning essays would be published in *The Ecumenical Review* or in a book. The winning essayist would be invited to participate in the accredited Visitors' Programme.

11. Registration and Logistical Preparations

By early June 1997, 555 preliminary registrations had been received by the Assembly Office. Of these 64.35% were men, 35.65% women, 11.89% youth, 45.05% lay persons and 54% ordained.

A WCC staff team made a technical visit to Zimbabwe in February 1997 to determine facilities and negotiate the logistical aspects of assembly preparations. The staff of the Local Assembly Office and the leadership of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches attended the APC to give an update on the preparations in Harare.

Bishop Jonson in his presentation expressed the hope that the Padare would offer new insights and provide an entry into the ecumenical movement of the concerns and issues that would have to be dealt with in the coming years. It should also offer a meeting place between delegates and visitors. The business side of the Assembly should be limited to the delegates.

In the ensuing discussion, a number of questions were raised and responded to. Other points made included:

- the theme plenary must be exciting but provocation should be avoided;
- the Assembly has business to do as well as having celebrations; efforts should be made to avoid too much business coming at the end as an anti-climax;

- the Padare must also be the "open space" it was designed to be, to hear impulses from churches and other bodies, not just to hear about past activities; in order to run successfully, a careful schedule of activities should be drawn up and if possible published in advance;
- more time should be given for the Nominations Committee to present names prior to elections; if NCCs and REOs are to be involved, they should be informed in good time;
- were there were plans for regional meetings prior to the assembly to help prepare delegates for Harare? These should be a priority.
- had there been any follow up by the Assembly Worship Committee to the suggestion at Central Committee 1996 (minutes p.80) that the assembly might witness a celebration of Baptism in a local church?
- it would be important for adult delegates to have opportunity to listen to young people, and take seriously the future of the ecumenical movement;
- a good presence of local churches from Zimbabwe at the assembly must be ensured; they should be involved at all stages;
- we should not talk about Jubilee unless we can really do something practical to show that we mean what we say - such as providing Zimbabwe with relief from its foreign debts;
- it seemed that the Programme Guidelines Committee would have an enormous task, not only to assess past work but to put together suggestions for the WCC's future programme; particular care must be taken in working out its report;
- what channels were envisaged for bringing together proposals from regional pre-assembly meetings, proposals from the Hearings for future work, items raised through the padare?
- Small Groups must be *small* - 30 people in Canberra were too many;
- plenary speeches should not be too long - people will not listen beyond a certain limit, and time must be available for discussion.

Dr Tolen proposed that there not be a Public Issues Committee at the Assembly because it was an almost impossible task to reach agreement on a

text in such a large gathering. Dr Love disagreed, as she felt there were moments in the life of the Council when there was a real opportunity to speak out on an issue which may make a difference.

Bishop Jonson expressed appreciation for the comments made which had been noted and wherever possible taken into account. He called on staff to respond to some of the points made:

Ms Stromberg explained in more detail about the **Hearings**: the first set of Hearings, in five groups (according to the WCC's four programme units and the General Secretariat) were intended to review and assess programme work done over the past seven years. In the second stage, issues would need to be explored - through plenaries, Bible studies, Small Groups, Padare presentations, etc.

The third set of **Hearings** would work in six new groups, exploring the issues which would be loosely grouped under the same six headings round which the Padare is organised. This should be seen as a tool in which those interested in specific issues can together discuss what they think the Council ought to be working with in the future.

The intention was to organise the **Padare** under six different streams so that the various offerings can each be loosely grouped under one of these. Some reporting that ought to be done in the Hearings but probably could not be fitted in, such as reports on global gatherings - would be part of the Padare offerings.

It was hoped to have not more than 15 persons in each **Small Group**.

The **50th Anniversary Celebration** would be on the afternoon of Sunday 13 December followed by the worship/recommitment service.

Dr Ariarajah spoke about the work of assembly **Committees**, noting that all members of committees must be delegates. The concerns expressed about the task of the **PGC** were understood and shared: clearly this would be the most difficult, but also the most crucial, of the Assembly Committees. In earlier assemblies, future policy came from the reports and recommendations of the Sections, and the PGC worked with these to bring out the priorities. But in Harare, since there were to be no Sections, it would be necessary to see how the work of the assembly could come up with future programme priorities. A good deal of confidence would be placed in this Programme Guidelines Committee, and it was essential that its members have sufficient experience,

not to be bound by structures but willing to pick up new ideas as they come from all parts of the assembly.

Delegates would be asked to articulate what they believed to be issues which are important for the life of the churches; what they believe the WCC should be dealing with. The PGC would then try to see which issues could appropriately be handled at global level. Not all issues were suitable - many could be done by local churches or regionally or by other ecumenical partners.

Finally, the PGC would discuss the input and report back on what they had heard, what they envisage as possible future programmes for the Council. Theirs would indeed be a difficult and challenging task.

Regarding the **Public Issues Committee**: clearly it was not possible to make statements on all issues that delegates would wish - Central Committee was a better forum for that. But the possibility could not be ruled out that it may be necessary to speak out on certain issues. So provision was made for a PIC and it would be for the Business Committee to decide whether it should be used, and if so, what specific issues it should deal with.

Dr Ariarajah reiterated that the Assembly, as the highest Governing Body of the WCC, had specific work to do and the delegates must be enabled to do it. On the other hand, there would be no point in going to Africa unless participants had the chance to be impacted by the life of the churches there. He assured Central Committee that there would be many African offerings in the Padare, a plenary session on Africa, as well as many other opportunities to encounter Africa and its people.

The question about witnessing a **Baptism** had given rise to difficult discussions in both the AWC and the APC. Opinions diverged widely and it was not felt possible to go ahead with such a plan for a baptism during the assembly.

With regard to the **Registration of Visitors**, Ms McKay said that registration forms would be sent out in October 1997. Quotas had been established for each region but none had so far been filled.

The General Secretary responded on the issue of **Nominations** (see minutes of CC 1996, p.74): It was recognised that the support of NCCs and REOs would be needed to make this formula work. It had not yet been initiated because a large number of churches had not yet informed the Assembly Office of their delegations; only when this phase had been concluded could

the process of seeking nominations for Central Committee begin. It was hoped that the new process would result in less time being needed by the Nominations Committee.

Regarding **Youth** participation, Dr Raiser assured the Central Committee that preparations were geared towards ensuring maximum use of the Padare and Hearings so that the voice of youth would be represented. The present youth leadership was fully conscious of its responsibilities here.

On the question of the theme and the emphasis on Jubilee, Dr Raiser pointed to a dilemma: the theme was to have been understood as a way of capturing the dynamic of jubilee, but the jubilee dimension had moved into the background and the theme had taken over. Clearly there were expectations regarding the emphasis on jubilee which would have to be taken up, and processes were under way to deal with the issue of globalisation and in that context international debt, with a special focus on the indebtedness of African countries, so that this features prominently. The challenge would be taken very seriously.

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The report of the APC, together with more detailed documents on the Hearings and the 50th Anniversary Celebrations, were discussed in Unit Committees and their comments were passed on to the General Secretariat Committee. The GS Committee then brought a composite report to plenary with recommendations for action.

V. Action by the Central Committee

At a business session, Ms Gcabashe presented the report of the General Secretariat Committee on Assembly Matters.

The GS Committee had received the report of the APC (above), and made the following recommendations:

1. *that the following committees be formed for the Eighth Assembly:*
 - 1.1 **Business Committee**, as required by the constitution. A credentials sub-committee to be formed from its membership as or if required.
 - 1.2 **Nominations Committee**, as required by the constitution

1.3 Message Committee

The report of the Message Committee is *adopted* by the Assembly.

1.4 Finance Committee

1.5 Programme Guidelines Committee (PGC)

The PGC will be responsible for preparing a report which makes proposals for the future work of the Council, based on Assembly plenary discussions, small groups, Padare and Hearings. It is suggested that the Programme Guidelines Committee be comprised of about 30 persons who will divide themselves into sub-groups for the Hearings. The PGC would deal with policy aspects related to the General Secretariat, with a view to providing direction for future work, whereas the Hearing on the General Secretariat would review past programme work. It would also make a response to the Moderator's and the General Secretary's reports.

1.6 Public Issues Committee (PIC)

The PIC deals with carefully selected issues and/or on significant contemporary political concerns on which the Assembly may wish to pronounce its views.

1.7 Policy Reference Committee I (PRC I)

This Committee should work closely with the PGC and would deal with constitutional matters, applications for membership, relations with the Roman Catholic Church, Christian World Communions and REOs. Other items of a similar nature may also be referred here.

1.8 Policy Reference Committee II (provisional)

This Committee is provisional and would function only in so far as the Business Committee of the Assembly referred matters to it.

The Central Committee **agreed** that the above-mentioned Committees be formed for the Assembly.

2. The Assembly Planning Committee, in its report to Central Committee in 1996, gave notice of its intent to recommend a change in the Rules for the composition of the Business Committee.

The General Secretariat Committee recommended:

that the following amendment to Rule IV 5.a. be made in order to provide necessary continuity between the work of the APC and the management of the Assembly: (amendments to the existing Rule appear below in bold italics)

"The Business Committee of the Assembly shall consist of the Moderator and Vice Moderator or Vice Moderators of the Central Committee, the General Secretary, the Presidents of the Council, the *moderator or a member of the Assembly Planning Committee participating as a delegate, the moderator of the Assembly Worship Committee*, the moderators of hearings and committees who may appoint substitutes and ten delegates who are not members of the outgoing Central Committee, who shall be elected in accordance with Rule IV.2. *If the Moderators of the Assembly Planning Committee and of the Assembly Worship Committee are not delegates, they shall be invited as advisors to the Assembly and its Business Committee with voice but without vote*".

The Central Committee **agreed**, by a majority of more than two-thirds of those present and voting, to these amendments to Rule IV 5.a.

3. The GS Committee further **recommended** *the following amendment to Rule XVI.7: (the words in brackets would be deleted)*

New business or change in the agenda *at an assembly*:

"(When) *Any delegate to the Assembly may propose* (desires to have) an item of business to be included on, or any change in, the agenda. (And) If after consideration the Business Committee after its election has not agreed to (it's acceptance) the *proposal*, he or she may appeal the decision to (inform) the Moderator in writing. The Moderator shall at a convenient time (read) *inform the Assembly of the proposal* (the item of business or proposed change), and a member of the Business Committee shall explain the reasons for this refusal. The delegate may then give the reasons for its acceptance. The Moderator shall then without further debate put the following question to the Assembly: Shall the Assembly accept this (item of business/) proposal? A majority of the delegates present and voting shall (determine the question) *decide*. If the Assembly votes (in favour of the acceptance of the item of business or change) *to accept the proposal* the Business Committee shall (make proposals) *bring* as soon as possible *recommendations* for the inclusion of the item of

business or for the change (,) in the agenda."

The Central Committee **agreed**, by a majority of more than two-thirds of those present and voting, to these amendments to Rule XVI.7.

4. Assembly Leadership: The GS Committee **recommended**:

- a) that, recognizing the difficulty of achieving balances in the leadership in each part of the assembly, the desired balances in leadership (women - men; clergy - laity; youth, confessions, regions, etc.) be achieved in the assembly leadership as a whole;*
- b) that there be a moderator, vice-moderator and a person identified as a "facilitator" for each of the Hearings, and a moderator and a rapporteur for each of the Assembly Committees (except the Business Committee which is led by the Moderator and the General Secretary).*

The General Secretary explained that a limited group from among the delegates would be invited to take leadership responsibilities during the assembly. It was proposed that the required balances be observed within the total group, not necessarily in the leadership of each committee.

Metropolitan Chrysostomos did not feel it was necessary to state all these details in the Rules. What was important above all was to find competent people to take these leadership positions.

The Central Committee **agreed** to this recommendation.

- 5. The GS Committee recommended, and the Central Committee **agreed**: *to grant authority to the Executive Committee to make decisions needed for final arrangements for the Assembly.*
- 6. The Committee received a paper from the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson concerning the possible witnessing of a Baptism within a local Church during the Assembly in Harare. The Committee commended his paper to the Assembly Worship Committee for possible implementation in consultation with local churches.

The Central Committee **received** the report of the Assembly Planning Committee and the General Secretariat Committee's report on Assembly matters with appreciation for the work done.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT

(Some items dealt with by this Committee are reported on under the respective chapter of these minutes; they include the response to the General Secretary's and Moderator's reports, the CUV process, and the Eighth Assembly).

Ms Ritchie, chairing this business session, called on Ms Virginia Gcabashe, moderator of the Committee on the General Secretariat, to present the report.

In relation to the recommendation on the **General Secretary's and Moderator's reports** (see pp. 23-24) requesting "the Executive Committee to design and implement a procedure for conducting a dialogue on the Orthodox Churches' participation in and contribution to the life of the WCC", Dr Tsetsis pointed out that a number of Orthodox had met on several occasions to discuss their future in the World Council. But he felt that, before on embarking on that kind of exercise again, they must be clear themselves whether they believed in the ecumenical movement, and if so, what they could do to promote it. Unless there was something new to say, he did not feel it would be helpful simply to repeat the same things.

Dr Patelos underlined that in the long run it was the responsibility of the Orthodox Churches themselves to make use of the opportunities available through their participation in the ecumenical movement and in the WCC. Of course there were problems and these should be considered in a sensitive and careful way. But discussions always tended to come back to the same point: that the Orthodox participate as individuals or as a family of churches because of the current numerical imbalance.

Fr Alfeyev **moved** that a further point be added to the recommendations as follows:

that the Central Committee request the Executive Committee to appoint a working group to explore the implications of a reorganisation of the WCC on the basis of the model of families of churches.

This recommendation was supported by Bishop Serapion who explained that in the Middle East Council of Churches this model was successful. Many Orthodox felt that such a structure would respond to some of their concerns, and they were simply asking that the idea be given careful consideration, in the first place by a working group.

Dr Tsetsis said that such a model worked in the MECC because there were four distinct categories of churches; he did not feel it could be adapted sufficiently to the WCC situation, but he supported the proposal.

Metr. Chrysostomos wondered whether there was a real desire on the side of the Protestant brothers and sisters to have a contribution from the Orthodox churches in the Council. If so, then some changes would have to be made - in the Constitution, as well as in relation to the eucharist and koinonia. But when such changes had to be voted on, there was a danger of creating theological tensions or problems of ecclesiology.

He further explained that the Orthodox had prepared papers expressing their theological point of view; he felt that such declarations on the perspective of the Orthodox should be discussed by Central Committee too. During discussions on re-structuring the WCC it had also been important to take account of Orthodox views.

The Moderator responded, speaking as a member of CC and as an Orthodox. He referred to his report, stating that this participation of Orthodox representatives in speaking out - for the first time in his experience in CC - was an encouraging sign that they were becoming more active and committed in the life and witness of the World Council. Secondly, the Orthodox Churches were an essential integral part of this body. And thirdly, though there were problems and sensitivities, as well as uncertainties and tensions in relationships between the Orthodox and the WCC, these tensions should not simply be blamed on the WCC. Orthodox Churches, he said, were faced with tremendous problems and some of these were reflected in the life of the WCC. The Orthodox have to deal with these problems seriously, he felt.

While excellent work had been done in providing theological statements about Orthodox concerns, the reports tended to be Orthodox monologues; the time had come to move from monologue to dialogue, and this had been the intention behind the meeting he had initiated in Antelias - talking with each other instead of about each other, stated the Moderator.

Regarding the motion by Fr Alfeyev: the Moderator had mentioned the concept of Family, but various models must be explored. The family model may work in the MECC, but the family, communion, the church - all have different connotations in different traditions. Thus, he favoured starting an exploration of various models for our fellowship in this Council, and he wondered whether Fr Alfeyev would agree to amend his motion by adding "...including the exploration of a model on a family basis".

Fr Alfeyev responded that he would prefer his own formulation: that a working group should first study the matter and make some recommendations for and against, which could then be discussed.

A vote was taken on the motion to add this additional point to the recommendations:

"that the Central Committee request the Executive Committee to appoint a working group in order to explore the implications and reorganisation of the World Council of Churches on the basis of the model of families of churches."

The motion was **lost**.

Archbishop Peers commented that, as a non-Orthodox, he supported the Moderator on the subject of dialogue. He also agreed with Dr Tsetsis because he believed such dialogue would challenge the Orthodox to deeper and newer reflection in the terms in which he was speaking. This would give the rest of CC a chance to hear what was happening in a rapidly changing situation and the consequences of those changes, allowing a response as equals in a dialogue.

Mr Kirov emphasised some of the problems with regard to Eastern Europe. The situation of Orthodox Churches had been greatly affected by the changes there which were so deep that their importance had not yet been fully grasped. It was therefore very difficult to have a clear view of the attitude of the churches there towards the ecumenical movement, towards the processes taking place in the Orthodox churches. Though there were many problems, he was grateful that in starting this dialogue there was a readiness on the part of Protestants and Orthodox to talk with each other. With God's help it would be possible to achieve a firm basis to stay together and move forward.

The Central Committee **agreed** to the recommendations as they stood (see page 24).

Dr Park proposed a recommendation in relation to the financial responsibilities of member churches referred to by the General Secretary in his report, and the fact that some 50% of the churches still made no membership contribution. He **moved** that

"the Central Committee encourage its member churches to strengthen their financial contributions in various possible ways such as contributions in

kind by hosting WCC meetings, and that it instruct the Finance Committee to seek ways to include these in the budgeting process as appropriate."

Ms Gcabashe felt this was helpful for churches which were not in a position to make financial contributions. However, the General Secretary pointed out that, while contributions in kind were a symbol of commitment, invitations to host meetings in distant countries did not necessarily save costs for the Council in terms of travel and other expenses. This should be borne in mind when extending such invitations.

The Central Committee **agreed** to the recommendation.

2. Programme Evaluation Report

The General Secretariat Committee had given consideration to the report⁸ on Programme Evaluation, and underscored the importance of this process. It recommended, and the Central Committee **agreed**

that the function of strategic planning, coordination and evaluation have a clear and strengthened place in the new internal structure of the WCC.

3. Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the WCC

The GS Committee had considered a paper setting out a proposed framework for the 50th anniversary celebrations⁹, since the change in Assembly dates had consequences for plans for the celebration of the 50th anniversary in Harare, as well as the invitation to member churches to observe a 'Recommitment Day'.

It was therefore felt that a more open and decentralised framework for celebrating the 50th anniversary and renewing commitment to ecumenism would underline the commitment expressed in the CUV to holding global and local expressions of ecumenism together and to partnership with other ecumenical bodies.

The GS Committee recommended, and the Central Committee **agreed**:

a) that the period between 20 September and 14 December 1998 be a

⁸ see Appendix IX - list of documents available on request

⁹ *ibid*

special time of ecumenical celebrations and recommitment for WCC member churches and ecumenical partners; and that 20 September be reserved as a special recommitment day when churches would be encouraged to use specially prepared materials and be asked to take up a special offering for the World Council of Churches;

- b) that the World Council of Churches accept the invitation of the Dutch Churches to participate in the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam on Sunday 20 September 1998.*

4. Ecumenical Institute Bossey

The activities report of the Bossey Institute was received and strongly commended. The reports given by the Moderator of the Board, Dr Robert Welsh, and the Director of the Institute, Dr Heidi Hadsell, emphasized new directions for the academic programme and management of the Institute. Efforts for increased financial stability were noted with appreciation.

5. Office of Communication

The General Secretariat Committee strongly commended the work of the Office of Communication and looked forward to the implementation of the Evaluation Report with its integrated approach for communication across the whole of the Council's work.

6. Office on Inter-Religious Relations (OIRR)

The General Secretariat Committee strongly commended the work of the Office of Inter-Religious Relations and particularly noted the importance of the continuation and expansion of the dialogue programme.

7. Office of Church and Ecumenical Relations (OCER)

The General Secretariat Committee strongly commended the work of the Office of Church and Ecumenical Relations in this past period, especially in light of the very limited resources devoted to this effort. The Committee hoped that such efforts would be a central focus of WCC work in the period after the Assembly. In that regard, the Committee noted with concern a reference in the evaluation of OCER's work to the "prevailing distinction between 'relationships' and 'programmes'", and recommended that every attempt be made to overcome such divisions in the new internal structure of the WCC.

Further, the Committee noted a positive evaluation of the use of

decentralized staff, such as in the US Office which has developed a model of work in which relations with the constituency and promotion of WCC programme have become increasingly inter-related. Serious consideration should be given to further decentralization in various regions in the period following the Eighth Assembly.

8. Ecumenical Forum

The proposal for an Ecumenical Forum of Christian Churches and ecumenical organisations had been made in the first draft of the CUV document. Reactions received had been mixed. A revised text about the Forum was included in the current CUV document on Issues Related to WCC Governance. After careful consideration, the GS Committee recommended, and the Central Committee agreed:

to urge a process of consultation involving churches, ecumenical organisations, confessional families and ecumenical associations of different sorts regarding the idea of an "Ecumenical Forum" (described in the CUV document on Issues Related to WCC Governance) as a priority matter, with a report to the Assembly seeking further support and commitment.

9. Report of the General Secretariat

The General Secretariat Committee recommended, and the Central Committee agreed:

to receive the Report of the General Secretariat Committee with appreciation for all the work that it represented, and with profound thanks to programme and administrative staff for the work done.

REPORT OF UNIT I COMMITTEE: UNITY AND RENEWAL

Ms Ritchie, presiding, invited Mme Seddoh, vice-moderator of the Unit I Committee, to present the report. Mme Seddoh explained that in the absence of the moderator, Metropolitan Daniel of Moldavia and Bukovina, she wished to ask Dr Paul Crow to present it. The report was as follows:

Introduction

The Unit I Committee welcomed the work of Unit I and commended the staff for their dedication, commitment and perseverance in the period

since the Canberra Assembly. The Committee recognized the pressures on the staff in a time of financial crisis and restructuring.

The Unit Committee had extensive discussion about the Common Understanding and Vision process, and briefer discussions about the work of the Unit and the Reports of the Moderator and the General Secretary.

As members reflected back on the past seven years, strong concern was expressed with regard to the working style of the Unit and of the Central Committee. It was felt that the pressure of work being brought forward meant that there was not sufficient time to engage fully in serious consideration of important matters, nor to prioritise work. Because of this pressure, reports were adopted without time for adequate reflection. It was hoped that examination could be given to the future working style of Unit Committees and of the Central Committee to ensure that papers were received well in advance and sufficient time given for a more in-depth reflection on a lesser number of issues before being adopted or received.

Concern was also expressed about the fact that a number of documents were received at this meeting only in English. If the WCC was to be a participatory organization, it was important that people be empowered in the use of languages made available to be able to read, understand, and speak on the matters before the WCC. It was perceived that this situation was a result of the cuts made in the Language Service.

A. Reflection on the Life of the Unit since Canberra

The inter-relationship of unity and renewal had been an important organizing principle for the entire Unit since its establishment in 1991. The title of the Unit was a constant reminder that the quest for the visible unity of the churches for the sake of God's mission in the world required that all take seriously the challenge of renewal. The inter-related themes of unity and renewal could not be ignored but deserved to remain very prominent in any future proposal for structural reorganization.

Unit I, its Committee and Commission had come a long way since the Unit was formed at the last restructuring. At the outset it was a struggle to understand the task and find ways to integrate the seemingly disparate parts of the work. Many of the programme areas had a strong history, loyal constituencies, and established ways of working. Some had constitutional identities in their own right. Yet the Unit was able to develop a vision for a unified approach. The Unit Commission, meeting

in Evian in 1992, advocated a "move towards a common mind and a more integrated unit by programmatic interaction and intra-unit cooperation while continuing the ongoing tasks..".

A spirit of collegiality and a positive style of collaboration had evolved within the Unit. This good climate was due in part to the increased commitment of staff to collaboration, communication, and shared projects. The Committee recognized and affirmed the high degree of cooperation among the streams and their staff which had developed within Unit I. Most recently, there had been valuable cooperation among the streams, specifically in relation to:

- the consultation on the *Laos* to which all streams contributed,
- the work together on the Common Date of Easter, by Worship and Spirituality and Faith and Order,
- the contributions to the Oslo conference on the Viability of Ecumenical Theological Education made by Faith and Order, Lay Participation Towards Inclusive Community, and the Worship Consultant to its worship.

The programmatic configuration had worked well, and the combination of issues had been mutually beneficial. There had been a balance of the theoretical and the practical which contributed to an increased quality of work. The Committee commended the good stewardship of resources in this Unit, particularly reflected in the stringent financial management.

The Committee wished to thank all the staff for their extraordinary efforts, effectiveness and good spirit through a very difficult time in the life of the WCC.

A particular concern was raised with regard to the area of worship and spirituality. Did the inability to appoint a Worship and Spirituality staff person (despite the fact that this had been agreed to by the Central Committee) reflect not only the financial position of the WCC, but also the sense of the priorities of the WCC lying in directions other than worship and spirituality? This Unit wished to affirm a fundamental priority for worship and spirituality, not only as a programmatic option, but as the undergirding of our common calling.

As a Unit committed to unity and renewal, the Committee noted with sadness the recent withdrawal from the WCC of the Georgian Orthodox Church. It observed that other Orthodox churches were also raising

significant questions about their participation, and concern was expressed about the implications of this situation for the life of the Council.

B. The Content and Direction of the Work of the Streams

1. Joint Work by Worship and Spirituality and Faith and Order

In order to facilitate further discussion on the **Common Date of Easter**, the Unit I Committee recommended that the Central Committee:

- *receive the Report on the Common Date of Easter;*
- *transmit this Report to the Harare Assembly, (it could be referred to in the Report of the Moderator of Central Committee to the Assembly as well as in the Report to the Unit I Hearing);*
- *take the topic and Report into account when ways of observing the Millennium were discussed;*
- *take note of the need to work on the longer-term implications of this Report.*

The Central Committee **agreed**.

Mr Zau Yaw was grateful for this recommendation, as the lack of a common date of Easter was a real stumbling block for mission activities in countries like Myanmar. He hoped there would be a positive outcome to the proposal.

Metropolitan Chrysostomos referred to the historical issues which lay behind the selection of the date of Easter in Eastern and Western calendars. If the report were to be distributed more widely, it would need to be related to the decision on the canons at the first Council of Nicea and to have the discussion in that context. Otherwise there would be a danger of creating further difficulties for Orthodox participation in the World Council.

2. Worship and Spirituality

The Unit I Committee recommended to the Central Committee:

- *that the work on **Worship and Spirituality** should continue in any new structure. The rich potential of this work and its significance for the life of the Council had been clearly identified from the time of the Commission meeting at Evian until the present;*
- *that the appointment of a staff person for **Worship and Spirituality**, affirmed by the Central Committee in 1995 (see Minutes, p.140), take place as soon as possible.*

(The post was advertised in 1995 and applications were received, but this position, along with others, was frozen by the Executive Committee because of the financial crisis. Some other positions affected had since been filled, and new positions created and filled. While the Unit Committee acknowledged the current financial stringency and the necessity for consequent staff cutbacks, it believed there was all the more reason for prayer to undergird the life of the Council at this time, and for the spiritual life of all concerned to be deepened together.)

The Central Committee **agreed** to the recommendation.

Dr Larsson said that, in spite of the lack of staff in the Worship and Spirituality stream, the quality of the worship life of the Council during meetings such as Central Committee remained high. Perhaps the fact that it was not possible to celebrate the eucharist together had led those planning worship to find other expressions of worship together. Nevertheless, at this last CC meeting before the Assembly, she wished to express dissatisfaction that the question of eucharistic hospitality was not mentioned among the list of recommendations. She was aware of the difficulties, and recalled the discussion in connection with planning for the worship at Harare, but the aim to achieve eucharistic hospitality must not be set aside and work should continue actively with this aim in mind. The Church of Sweden had stressed in its response regarding CUV the belief that the eucharist was a meal for pilgrims and an expression of the deepest possible togetherness.

Mr Gill asked whether he was correct in his understanding that decisions being made in this Central Committee pertained only to the period up to the Assembly, and did not pre-judge what would come through the Programme Guidelines process at Harare. He urged that a greater discipline be exercised in drawing up recommendations to ensure that they were expressed clearly leaving no doubt as to their intention.

3. Faith and Order

The Unit I Committee recommended to the Central Committee that:

- *the study guide "Towards Sharing the One Faith" be sent to delegates to the Harare Assembly as part of their preparation;*
- *the work of Faith and Order continue to be vitally connected with other aspects of work for unity and renewal in the WCC;*
- *it affirm Faith and Order as a vital instrument of the member churches of the WCC and other churches as they continue to work towards the goal of visible unity.*

The Central Committee **agreed**.

Bishop Engelhardt asked for further information about the work of Faith and Order and how it had been evaluated by the Unit Committee. In particular he was interested to know more about the present situation in relation to the reception process around Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM). Churches in Germany were constantly asking this question because BEM had marked an important point in their interest in the work of WCC when it was sent to the churches in the early 1980s. He felt that some word should be said at this stage in the Council's life.

Responding, Dr Crow said that Faith and Order was indeed trying to encourage the continuing reception process of BEM through follow up studies such as those on ecclesiology and on hermeneutics.

4. Lay Participation Towards Inclusive Community

The Unit I Committee recommended to the Central Committee that:

- *it receive the statement from the Laos Consultation "Towards a Common Understanding of the Theological Concepts of Laos/Laity: the People of God" as the next step towards an understanding of the significance of the laos (see Appendix IV);*
- *it receive the document "An Interim Statement on the Theological and Empirical Understanding of the Issue of Disabilities" (see Appendix V) and share it extensively with member churches and ecumenical organizations as a starting point for further theological and practical reflection;*
- *the terminology "differently abled", adopted for use by the WCC at the Canberra Assembly in 1991, be changed to "people with disabilities", this being the more commonly used term in local and international fora;*
- *it welcome the initiative of the Lay Centres to use the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the voyage of Vasco da Gama to bring the issues of international debt and the effects of colonialism to the attention of the world community.*

The Central Committee **agreed**.

A further point was noted, but action on it was postponed until the question of internal structure was dealt with: the Unit Committee recommended that

- the issues of the laity and inclusive community remain within a grouping similar to the current Unit I.

Archbishop Peers supported the initiative to make use of the 500th anniversary of the voyage of Vasco de Gama to draw attention among other things to the effects of colonialism. At the time of the 500th anniversary of Columbus, aboriginal people in North and South America used the occasion to engage others in helping them to get the story of their first contacts with Europeans known. Such an occasion would give them opportunity to get their voices heard through the media to which they normally have little access.

5. Ecumenical Theological Education

The Unit I Committee recommended that the Central Committee:

- *receive the Report of the Oslo Consultation "Towards a Viable Theological Education: Ecumenical Imperative, Catalyst of Renewal" and send it to the Churches for study;*
- *affirm ETE as a vital instrument of the WCC as it fulfils its role of the primary instrument of the ecumenical movement working toward the goal of visible unity, mission and justice; that the accent of the profile of ETE be on the ecumenical theological rather than on education;*

The Committee noted the following elements of the distinctive contribution of Ecumenical Theological Education:

- * programmatic dialogue on key themes of theological education on the world level;
- * project-related networking between regional associations and donor-agencies;
- * promotion of common standards in ecumenical curriculum and ecumenical teaching;
- * programmatic efforts for supporting the access of women in theological education institutes both in the North and the South.

The Central Committee **agreed** to these recommendations.

A further point was noted: that the Central Committee

- **consider** seriously the Oslo proposal for some regionalizing of staff as a way of developing alternative financial and staffing scenarios to ensure that the future development can be faced in a reactive and proactive manner, and to further closer links with the churches and institutions in the region.

Dr Best felt that theological education was too often equated with the work of seminaries and theological schools - the formation of those to be ordained into the ministry. Yet it also took place in lay academies, as well as in myriad congregations around the world for people of all ages. She urged that any new structure should bring together all aspects of education and ecumenical formation, rather than separating ETE as in the past.

C. Accountability and Ecumenical Memory: Reporting Responsibly at Harare

The Unit I Committee recommended to the Central Committee that it seriously reconsider the decision not to publish an accountability volume *From Canberra to Harare*, for the following reasons:

- The World Council is accountable to its member churches for the work done since the Canberra Assembly in 1991. It had an obligation, both constitutional and moral, to report fully on its work to the Harare Assembly in 1998. Only on this basis can the churches' delegates exercise their responsibilities in Harare to evaluate the Council's work and to discern programmatic and structural directions for the future.
- Because it would be impossible for all delegates to hear reports from and discuss all areas of the Council's work, the Committee was convinced of the need for reconsideration of the decision not to publish a volume *From Canberra to Harare* giving a detailed account of the Council's life and work over the past seven years. Such a volume should be attractively presented, giving details of programmatic work, the relation of programmes to the Canberra mandate, and their significance for the churches and the ecumenical movement as a whole. As part of the Assembly preparation process, the volume should be sent to participants for study and use in local and regional preparatory meetings. If a full report was not possible, it was felt desirable for the Unit alone, or in concert with other units, to publish a report of its work.

The Unit I Committee highlighted a number of concerns about the Assembly:

- Careful attention should be paid to the issue of "recommitment". Who would be making the recommitment and in what capacity? It would be an ecclesiological problem for some delegates if they were asked to make a decision at the Assembly on behalf of their church should the

content of the decision change significantly at the Assembly from what they came prepared to adopt. This could result in strained relationships rather than celebration.

- A number of concerns were raised about the *Padare*. If Units or programmatic areas were expected to present at the *Padare*, adequate staff and funding would need to be provided. How would decisions about requests for presentations be made? The Committee believed that the emphasis for content should come from the programmatic areas of the Council, otherwise issues and concerns that may have limited interest, or be of low priority within the life of the Council and its member churches, could be presented in such a fashion as to be out of proportion to their actual importance. If a future agenda for the WCC were to be based solely or primarily on the *Padare* presentations, it could be seriously distorted.
- Further concerns were raised about the presentations in the Hearings and the provision of necessary resources in terms of people, funding, and expertise. Members of the Committee offered to help as appropriate in the preparation of work for both Hearings and *Padare*.
- Given that the disabilities issue was an important one for the Assembly, the Committee was concerned about adequate resources to properly prepare for the presentation of this issue and representation by persons with disabilities. Similarly, if there were to be a presentation of the disability issue at the *Padare*, adequate resources, including the provision of hospitable central space, must be made available for it.

Dr Tveter was concerned that the Unit Committee had spent considerable time discussing the CUV process and had submitted a full report to the sub-group of the Executive as requested. Nevertheless they had felt it to be of sufficient importance to be included as an appendix to the report of the Unit I Committee, and she asked why it was not.

The General Secretary pointed out that Unit I's comments - along with those from the other Units - had been seriously considered by the sub-group of the Executive working on the CUV text, and its recommendations had been taken into account in preparing the revised version.

The Central Committee received the report of the Unit I Committee with appreciation.

REPORT OF UNIT II COMMITTEE: CHURCHES IN MISSION: HEALTH, EDUCATION, WITNESS

Presiding this business session, Ms Ritchie invited Dr Marion Best, moderator of the Unit II Committee, to present the report. Dr Best drew particular attention to the document entitled *Towards Common Witness* which the Central Committee would be asked to receive.

The report was as follows:

Introduction

At this time of transition, the Committee on Programme Unit II experienced the challenge of adequately dealing with the programme aspects of the Unit's mandate as well as responding to the concerns of the Common Understanding and Vision process, issues relating to the Assembly, and the reports of the Moderator of the Central Committee and of the General Secretary.

Having received with appreciation the Unit II Activities Report and the minutes of the meetings of the Unit II Commission (Salvador, December 1996) and the Unit Executive Group (Geneva, June 1997), the Committee discussed only matters that were to be reported to it or that required action by Central Committee.

1. Towards Common Witness

The document *Towards Common Witness — A Call to Adopt Responsible Relationships in Mission and to Renounce Proselytism* (see Appendix VI) was prepared on the basis of a broad consultative study process in response to the request by the Central Committee (Moscow 1989) and the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order (Santiago de Compostela 1993). Important inputs and perspectives were received from the process that produced the Joint Working Group's study document, *The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness* (1995), from ecumenical organizations (including the Conference of European Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches), churches, mission agencies, local congregations and individuals.

The Unit II Committee received and slightly amended this document, recognizing its timeliness and importance for churches in all parts of the world and seeing it as a means of calling them to witness in unity and to engage in responsible relationships in mission.

The Unit II Committee recommended:

- *that the Central Committee commend the document "Towards Common Witness" to the churches for their reflection and action;*
- *that, to facilitate the implementation of the document, the Central Committee recommend:*

a) *that the churches and related agencies:*

- *make greater efforts to educate their own faithful in local congregations, Sunday schools, training centres and seminaries to respect and love members of other churches as sisters and brothers in Christ;*
- *actively promote knowledge of the heritages and contributions of other churches that, despite differences, confess the same Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, worship the same triune God and are engaged in the same witness in the world;*
- *promote efforts towards reconciliation by addressing historical wounds and bitter memories;*
- *initiate (with the assistance of the WCC when necessary) encounter and dialogue at local, national and regional levels with those engaging in mission work that is perceived as proselytism, in order to help them understand their motivations, make them aware of the negative impact of their activities, and promote responsible relationships in mission;*
- *seek opportunities for working together with other churches on pastoral and social issues that affect local communities and countries as a whole, and be open to authentic cooperation with others in addressing the needs of the people being served;*
- *together renounce proselytism as a denial of authentic witness and an obstruction to the unity of the church, and urge support for common witness, unity and understanding among the churches proclaiming the gospel;*
- *continue to pray together for Christian unity, allowing God's Spirit to lead the churches into fuller truth and faithfulness.*

b) *that the World Council of Churches:*

- *strengthen its emphasis on ecumenical formation using all resources of its education sector, in view of the growing trend towards confessionalism and confessional rivalries;*
- *undertake a study on ecclesiology and mission, since many of the points of tension and division in relation to common witness stem from conflicting understandings in these areas.*

Although it was recognized that the main responsibility for implementing

the *Towards Common Witness* document lay with the churches, the WCC should play a facilitating role in stimulating the dialogue within and among the churches.

The Central Committee **agreed** to the above recommendations.

2. Education initiative in Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union

The Unit II Committee received a report on the activities undertaken in response to the 1991 Central Committee recommendation concerning the need to accompany the churches of Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union as they developed Christian religious education.

The resulting programme assisted the churches in a number of ways. It supported the recovery of the Orthodox way of teaching the faith, building up the faith of the newly baptized, strengthening the local church and promoting ecumenical cooperation. The programme included helping Orthodox churches in curriculum development for Sunday schools and parish education and in leadership/teacher training, including on-site experience and training in curriculum preparation and presentation. Teacher training was also carried out through an ecumenical programme involving several member churches.

The Committee noted that the ecumenical teacher training programme would conclude with a workshop in 1998 sponsored by the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic, and that the Orthodox programme would end with an evaluation meeting in 1998. It was anticipated that the latter meeting would study the possibility of setting up an Inter-Orthodox Christian Religious Education Training and Documentation Centre.

The Committee noted with satisfaction that the goals for this priority programme had been realized, in that a significant foundation for the continuing Christian religious education work of the churches in Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union had been established.

3. Ecumenical Statement on Mission and Evangelism

Following substantial input from the Salvador world mission conference and consultations involving a broad spectrum of missiologists, theologians, mission agencies and other individuals and groups, including a consulta-

tion on "Mission in the 21st Century", work was continuing on the articulation of an ecumenical statement on mission and evangelism with the purpose of promoting the renewal of the churches in mission in the face of contemporary challenges and opportunities. Issues such as globalization and fragmentation, the search for meaning in post-modern secular society and the nature of witness in multifaith and multicultural situations were being addressed. It was expected that the draft statement would be discussed during the Unit II Hearings at the Harare assembly, and that the final document would be forwarded to the Central Committee at its 1999 meeting.

4. Commission on World Mission and Evangelism

Unit II Committee received the resolutions of the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (Salvador 1996) which requested the Central Committee to establish a Board on World Mission and Evangelism. It also received and considered a detailed proposal for such a Board drawn up by a consultative group appointed by the Conference¹⁰.

The Unit II Committee recommended:

- *that, under the provisions of the CUV text on Issues Related to WCC Governance, a Commission on World Mission and Evangelism be established along the lines set out in the minutes of the Unit II Executive Group meeting of June 1997; (see footnote 10)*
- *that, in addition to what has been proposed in the above-mentioned minutes, the Commission include among its concerns issues relating to health and healing (CMC) and community and justice (URM);*
- *that the membership of the Commission include the categories outlined in the above-mentioned minutes, allocated proportionally. Thus:*
 - a) the majority should be drawn from member churches of the WCC;*
 - b) a substantial number should be chosen from those nominated by the affiliated bodies of the Conference;*
 - c) the remaining members should be drawn from a wider constituency;*

¹⁰ See minutes of the meeting of the Unit II Executive Group of June 1997, pp.28-31 - available from WCC Unit II.

- *that representatives of the present Unit II Commission accompany the implementation of the above as appropriate;*
- *that the above recommendations, with the comments made, be referred to the next Central Committee for consideration and eventual implementation.*

Mr Allsop warned against appointing Commissions in the same way as in the previous structure - that was to be avoided at all costs. Surely it was time to capture a new vision of operating rather than remaining captive to the constructs of the past? Of course the history was important but we should release ourselves from it and move into something new.

Bishop Engelhardt agreed that the recommendations should be looking towards the future, in which case he felt there should be some reference to the year 2000 as a *kairos*, where mission and evangelism could be seen as a common task with other churches. The Year 2000 was not only to be a Holy Year but one in which the churches come together to undertake special ecumenical efforts to serve the proclamation of the gospel together.

The General Secretary responded that, within the desire to be sensitive to the challenges of the new century, it had to be acknowledged that, for some of the WCC's constituency, matters of identity and commitment were involved. Article III of the Constitution as revised "incorporated the heritage" given to the WCC by earlier bodies. Certain core constitutional functions must be visible in the way the Council organised its work. It had been made clear by those churches and agencies who felt particularly committed to the missionary calling that for them the continued support of the work of WCC depended on whether that commitment was visibly identifiable in the organisation of the Council in such a way that they could participate in shaping the activities of the Council in this area.

There had therefore been a commitment that, following these years when the former Commission on World Mission and Evangelism was absorbed into Unit II where this identifiable identity was felt to be less visible, in re-organising the activities now, this particular point of reference would again be visible within the organisation of the Council. It was one example of a specialised constituency, Faith and Order being another.

Responding to Bishop Engelhardt, Ms Langerak said that the Year 2000 had not been a focus at Salvador as such, but rather there, and in discussions leading up to the Common Witness document and the statement on mission

and evangelism, the relevance of the churches' witness into the 21st century and the urgency to respond faithfully to the challenges on this horizon had been stressed. In this regard, priority areas for the churches' witness to the gospel had been identified. These included cultural pluralism, the search for meaning in secularised situations, concern for authentic evangelism and what it meant to be in mission together. It was clear that it was important to give fresh impetus to joint efforts by the churches with reference to the Year 2000, so the suggestion was welcome.

The Central Committee **agreed** to the above recommendations.

5. Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation

The Unit Committee endorsed the recommendation of the Unit Executive Group for the formation of a Commission "appointed by the Central Committee to assist the WCC and the staff assigned to the Education and Ecumenical Formation team to form, shape and guide the educational life of the WCC".

The Unit Committee recommended, and the Central Committee **agreed**:

- that the proposal for a Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation be referred to the next Central Committee for consideration.

6. Present and future directions of the work of Unit II

The Unit Committee reviewed suggestions received from the Unit II Commission and Executive Group, the Executive Director's Report and the Programme Evaluation Report. In considering the present and future directions of the work of Unit II, it noted the proposals in the CUV documents and the proposed profiles of future staff teams on Mission and Evangelism and Education and Ecumenical Formation. It recognised that 1998 would be a transition year for the WCC and a year in which staff would largely be occupied with preparations for the Assembly.

In light of the above and within the context of the human and financial resources available, the Unit Committee recommended that the following areas of programme activity continue:

- a) preparing the ecumenical statement on mission and evangelism;
- b) promoting responsible relationships in mission, including calling the churches to common witness, and strengthening links with member

- churches, with the Roman Catholic Church, evangelicals, independent churches and others, around the concern for mission in unity;
- c) following up the Gospel and Cultures study, including preparing a study guide for use in local congregations and exploring a number of theological and missiological issues raised in the course of the study;
 - d) following up the Salvador world mission conference through further publications, communication, development of nascent relationships and assisting churches in their mission thinking and practice;
 - e) promoting an understanding and practice of mission as solidarity with people in their struggles for justice, dignity and fullness of life;
 - f) encouraging and equipping the churches for their ministry of health, healing and wholeness;
 - g) promoting Christian education in religiously and culturally pluralist societies;
 - h) encouraging the re-reading of the Bible together in cultural context;
 - i) developing the future work of a team for Education and Ecumenical Formation on the basis of the renewed vision for education reflected in the CUV documents.

The Unit Committee affirmed the contributions of staff who bring the ethos, style and theological insights of Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches to the WCC's task of mission and evangelism.

Conclusion

The Unit II Committee expressed appreciation for the work of staff during the past year and affirmed the significance of the areas of concern addressed by the Unit. It further expressed its overall support for the thrusts and implications of the CUV process, underscoring the importance of deepening the ecumenical fellowship, renewing the churches in mission and responding in fresh ways to the essential calling to unity, justice and diakonia. It recognized the current exploration of a common understanding and vision for the ecumenical movement and the WCC as an expression of the search to respond in faithfulness to the prompting of the Spirit in these times.

The Central Committee received the report of the Unit II Committee with appreciation.

REPORT OF UNIT III COMMITTEE: JUSTICE, PEACE AND CREATION

Ms Ritchie, presiding, invited Dr Margot Kässmann, moderator of the Unit III Committee, to present the report, entitled *Harvesting the Fruits of the Work of the past Period*. Extracts were shown of a videotape of the recent launching of the Peace to the City Campaign that took place in Johannesburg at the end of August 1997.

Introduction

In reviewing the work of the past period in order to sharpen the challenges for the future, it was evident to the Unit III Committee that, as intended when the Unit was formed, the inter-relating of justice, peace and creation had proved valid. The integration of the three concerns had been, by and large, successful.

As the work progressed, the Theology of Life process facilitated the integration and consolidation of these concerns, linking ecclesiology and ethics and embodying a new and creative style of work. The Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women, and particularly the *Living Letters* programme, in a concrete way brought the WCC to the doorstep of the member churches and urged them to engagement with women in their struggles. In response to the challenge from the churches, the Programme to Overcome Violence was born and gave shape to the Peace to the City Campaign. Here the common concern was taken up in the service of human need, the breaking down of barriers between people and the promotion of a culture of justice and peace.

Apart from the above-mentioned programmes, it was decided to focus attention on the challenge of globalisation, and in the period leading up to the Assembly, Unit III would continue to work on this issue. It was imperative for the ecumenical movement to grapple with the complexity of the issue and to provide an ecumenical vision to the present expressions of globalisation in the spirit of justice, peace and creation.

The Unit Committee affirmed the Indigenous People's Programme which had helped to put Indigenous issues such as land rights and spirituality on the ecumenical agenda. It had also responded to the call by the Canberra Assembly (1991) as expressed in the assembly statement on "Land and Indigenous Peoples: Move beyond Words."

Evaluation of the Unit's work indicated that work with young people had

still not been fully integrated into the work of the Council. This was strongly affirmed as a priority up to the Harare Assembly and beyond.

It was apt that the Unit highlight the ongoing work on Africa at the Eighth Assembly in Harare. In preparation for a strong challenge emerging out of the Assembly, the work of Unit III on the *Jubilee and the African Kairos: An Agenda for the Reconstruction of Africa* was commended.

African churches have been encouraged and enabled to be at the centre of and to guide ecumenical efforts to address African concerns. Frameworks had been elaborated to coordinate external church and agency solidarity and advocacy in support of the African churches. This had placed the Council in a position to accompany African churches and civil society organisations as they confront the massive challenges of the coming years.

In any reflection on harvesting the fruits of this period the question to be constantly raised was: How would the WCC challenge the churches to active engagement and ownership of the concerns this Unit had grappled with and continue to do so?

Reflections arising from the Evaluation discussion

1. Methodology, Communication and Styles of Work

- *Sokoni*, as the enlarged Commission meeting of Unit III experienced, provided a new methodology for ecumenical reflection. It offered to the ecumenical movement a working style that stimulated renewed vision, deeper analysis and more creative cooperative methods, all pursued in an ecumenical spirit. Inclusiveness is prized, multi-entry points for analysis and advocacy are used, and the kind of participation that builds on the experiences and energies of every day life is facilitated.

- The Unit Committee affirmed the need to link methodology and themes; relationships and programmes were inseparable.

- The *Living Letters* methodology of building relationships with the churches, personifying the WCC in the local context, must be continued in the future work of the entire Council.

- There was a strong affirmation of the Unit's work in carrying forward the issues of justice, peace and creation. However, concern was expressed that there was a gap in disseminating information to local contexts/ congregations. Some felt the Unit's work had little impact on local

contexts, but in general it appeared that the work was experienced in the regions in unexpected ways.

- The success of the Climate Change programme was affirmed as a new style of work. However, the Unit urged that in the process of "farming out" programmes to the regions, the coordination and monitoring of such programmes be carefully managed. The WCC had to ensure that the ethos of the programme reflected the spirit of the global ecumenical movement and that the results contributed to a wider constituency.

2. WCC as an International Organisation

- The need for a strong WCC was affirmed, because it is an international organisation that gives voice to the churches on the international level. As such, it is a significant non-governmental actor in the process of global governance.
- The WCC provides information and guidance to the churches on international and internal conflicts, and helps interpret these increasingly complex issues, bringing to bear the perspective of the churches caught up in them.
- The WCC engages the churches in reflection on the religious dimensions and ethical implications of such conflicts. It calls the churches to coherent ecumenical witness and action to transform conflict and set in motion processes of authentic reconciliation.
- The WCC assists the churches to participate in and to exert concerted ecumenical influence on the United Nations.

3. Theology

- The important contribution of Unit III to the study process on ecclesiology and ethics was affirmed as it has made an impact on the CUV process. In cooperation with the Faith and Order stream of Unit I, it was successfully made clear that ethical engagement was intrinsic to the very being of the church. The "esse" of the church was at stake - on issues of racism, violence and the community of women and men. The question was raised: What difference did it make that the churches increasingly reflect, and act, together in responding to ethical issues?
- While the Theology of Life Process had clearly undergirded all the work of the Unit, further work was needed on how it would impact the overall theological work of the Council.

- The challenge remaining was how this experience of theological engagement would be shared with and communicated to other ecumenical gatherings, the churches, groups and movements etc. and contribute to theological education that recognised the contextuality of theological reflection.

4. Programme with Young People

- In the past period, the work with young people had best been seen in their contribution to the programmatic work of Unit III and of the Council as a whole, for example, on the Programme to Overcome Violence and the Gospel and Culture process. This must be strengthened and these efforts encouraged and affirmed by ensuring youth involvement in all areas of the Council's work.

- The administrative component of the Stewards' Programme could be removed from the mandate of the present limited youth staff in Unit III and given to the Conference or Assembly office, so that youth staff could concentrate on the programmatic inputs that young people could make.

- The Internship programme was affirmed. The important contribution of young people serving as interns was noted, with a reminder that they should not be seen as a replacement for staff in a time of downsizing. It was suggested that young people be hired to work in programmes throughout the Council. In the absence of young people in staff teams, one staff person in each team should be assigned the responsibility of promoting youth participation.

5. Programme to Overcome Violence

1997 was seeing some of the most active and dynamic work related to the Programme to Overcome Violence since it began in 1994, particularly related to the "Peace to the City" Campaign. In early 1997, specific partners and projects in the short list of cities were identified and explored, and research and development visits by POV staff were made to the first five of the cities participating actively in the Campaign: Durban, Rio de Janeiro, Belfast, Boston and Colombo.

Communication strategies and strategies for expanding the Campaign beyond the geographical boundaries of the cities had also been designed and implemented through an innovative use of the Internet and the World Wide Web, as well as through traditional print material. A meeting with the local coordinators in the Campaign and the POV Reference Group was held in Johannesburg preceding the public launch of the Campaign on 31.

August. A staff person, seconded for two years to the POV from the historic peace churches (Mennonites, Quakers and Brethren), began work in January 1997, primarily to help with the campaign. The working principles of the POV had been published and were available in anticipation that the churches would act to affirm them.

The proposed theological consultation in cooperation with Unit I planned for March 1998 would undergird the necessary deeper reflection of the issues at stake.

6. Ongoing concerns of Unit III

- While the successful conclusion of some programmes was commended, concern was expressed about how the challenges that have emerged would be followed up, for example, as in the outcome of the Decade. In addition there were areas of work that had been started and that needed to be continued. Reference was made particularly to the programme on Africa and the programme on Women in Conflict Situations.

- Concern was also expressed about the downsizing of staff and the need to sustain the important legacy that this Unit leaves to the Council.

- It was strongly urged that, after this restructuring process, renewed energy be given to the emerging challenges to justice, peace and creation. Too much of an inward-looking process was neither constructive nor creative.

- The WCC must continue to play a constructive role in providing a balance between the increasing bilateralism between the churches and the advantages of multilateral engagement and ecumenical cooperation which uniquely the WCC could provide.

- In the continuing concern for the integration of relationships and programmes, future work on human rights and on international affairs should be integral to ongoing work for justice, peace and creation.

In discussion on the report, Mr Muchopa asked whether, in the framework of POV, consideration would be given to the escalation of violence against black people in major European cities.

Dr Kässmann responded that the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) had given attention to the question of violence against foreigners, especially in Europe. Due to the reduced staff in PCR and POV, efforts were currently

concentrating on the Peace to the City campaign, but the deeper challenge to the churches would be kept in mind, especially in view of the theological consultation for March 1998.

Dr Blei commented on the frequent use of the term "successful" in this report. He wanted to hear also about programmes that had been less successful or which could be described as having failed. Dr Kässmann assured him that the Committee had also looked at the weak points - in particular there was disappointment at the failure to integrate the Youth programme into the entire work of the Unit. Another question was how to communicate the experience of *Sokoni* in a didactic way to churches, groups and movements? Efforts would be made to use the space offered by *Padare* to look further at this.

Metr. Chrysostomos felt the reference to the "esse" of the church was not correct; it was a matter of Christian anthropology. Dr Kässmann explained that this had been looked at in the Ecclesiology and Ethics programme. She had been encouraged by the Moderator to say that "ethical engagement is intrinsic to the very vocation of the church".

Regarding the criteria used for selecting the five cities for the Peace to the City campaign, one of these was that there should be groups - Christian groups, church groups - already existing at local level that can cooperate with others in these cities. For example, fourteen different groups were working together in Durban. In all the cases, churches were being encouraged to play a leading role in overcoming violence. It was hoped that other cities would join the process later but the intention was to concentrate on five until the assembly: Belfast, N.Ireland; Boston, USA; Colombo, Sri Lanka; Durban, South Africa; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Janet Scott believed the work of POV to be of immense importance. She noted that it was 50 years since the Religious Society of Friends in the UK had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize - the only church to have received it. They had discovered that peace-making had at least four parts:

- 1) refusal to engage in war or violence of any kind so that one's own life was the focus of peace-making;
- 2) the relief of suffering and assistance to those affected by violence;
- 3) mediation to assist peace-making where there was conflict;
- 4) the removal of the causes of war. That was where globalisation and the arms trade were connected.

She urged the WCC to continue its efforts with the POV, demonstrating the life that should be lived by those who are disciples of the Prince of Peace.

Dr Tolen suggested that more details on the way the Unit's programmes had been integrated would be helpful when it came to considering proposals for the future. Had such integration encountered difficulties or problems that could teach something about what we are going to come up against in future? Unit III had been the unit considered to be dealing with everything but theological questions, yet it had been able to demonstrate that theology and ethics were closely connected. and that in everyday life what it was doing was informed not only by material concerns but by its vision and theological vocation. He hoped this could be maintained.

Dr Kässmann responded that the ten affirmations of the World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (Seoul, Korea, 1990) had been the basis for forming the Unit on Justice, Peace and Creation, and these had led to thematic as well as to administrative integration.

Dr Tolen further expressed concern that the Youth programme was being cut back, and wondered whether the Council might approach the churches for resources to ensure that the Youth programme become more dynamic over the coming period.

Mr Akhura was also concerned about the difficulties facing the Youth programme, and feared that the suggestion to move the Stewards' Programme elsewhere would destroy the vision. Stewards had little opportunity of serving the Council once the meeting involved was over, and he urged that efforts be made to empower young people through providing other opportunities of service or study by means of scholarships. Dr Kässmann assured him that it was only the administrative side of the Stewards' Programme that was being referred to; the Programme itself would still belong to the Youth Office.

Ms Nontawasee was puzzled by the reference in the report to the Decade - Living Letters - "coming to the doorstep": did this mean that the door was closed? She urged that the work begun by the Decade continue its efforts to reach women at the grassroots, moving beyond the doorstep into their homes.

Dr Walker-Smith asked whether Unit III intended to adopt *Sokoni* as a methodology. Dr Kässmann said that it was being suggested but further work had to be done on what this would mean: how to capture this experiment of the Sokoni experience and help others to meet in a similar way but in a different context. This was a didactical question.

Dr Kässmann concluded the report by indicating the following recommendations from the Unit III Committee for action by Central Committee:

- *that, given the urgency of the issue of globalisation and in response to the expressed needs of the churches, the Central Committee call for a special hearing on globalisation at the Harare Assembly;*
- *that the Central Committee affirm the emphasis and direction of the Programme to Overcome Violence; request that adequate space be given at the Harare Assembly to report on the Peace to the City campaign in order for the Assembly to add momentum to the far reaching programmatic consequences for future work of the WCC;*
- *that the Central Committee call for the Programme to Overcome Violence to give special attention to the concern for "micro-disarmament" - i.e. the elimination of the small arms production, trade and use, and the proliferation of light weapons in towns and cities.*
- *that the Central Committee receive the final report of the mid-Decade Team Visits "Living Letters".*

The Central Committee agreed to these recommendations. The report of Unit III was received with appreciation.

REPORT OF UNIT IV COMMITTEE: SHARING AND SERVICE

The moderator of the Unit IV Committee, Bishop Gomez, and vice-moderator, Ms Jarjour, having already left, Ms Ritchie, presiding, invited Bishop Serapion to present the report. He noted that the work of Unit IV continued to be inspired by the Jubilee theme, with emphasis on the integration of fellowship, witness and service.

Introduction

The jubilee theme of the forthcoming Assembly had been a vivid and compelling theological theme undergirding the Council's work in sharing and service in recent years. At the recent meeting of the Unit IV Commission, continued reflection on the significance of the Jubilee theme for our life together through sharing and solidarity resulted in a short theological statement entitled *Jubilee: strategies for hope in times of crisis*. Perhaps this statement amongst others could contribute to the further work that would be done on the Common Understanding and Vision statement. A short extract is included here to give the faith context to the resolutions

on global sharing and solidarity presented in this report for adoption by Central Committee.

Strategies for Hope in Times of Crisis: - *We celebrate our unity as a fellowship of churches committed to the Jubilee values known in Jesus Christ, saviour and liberator of humankind, who was anointed by the Holy Spirit to bring good news to the poor, release to captives and healing to those who suffer; to set at liberty all who are oppressed; and to proclaim a time acceptable to God (Luke 4:19).*

We affirm that this Jubilee vision calls us forward toward the year 2000, on a pilgrimage shaped by the vision of the new heaven and earth that God has promised (Isaiah 66:22, Revelation 21:1-22:7) and strengthened by our partnership together to resist the powers of evil that surround us in our present realities (Romans 8:18-25).

In this vision of the promises of God and in these Jubilee values that express the mission of Jesus Christ, we also find our mission - both our identity and our common purpose - as the World Council of Churches. The unity that is our gift and our calling from Jesus Christ (John 17:21) is expressed through the integration of fellowship, witness and service. They are three threads in the fabric of a common life, woven together to embody Jubilee values in our present global reality of multiple crisis and fragile hope. Each of these three dimensions of our common life demands equal emphasis in the document, Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches.

The Unit IV Committee studied and discussed all the documentation related to the CUV process and comments had been submitted to the General Secretariat Committee. In the light of discussions on the CUV, and in the context of the programme evaluation conducted during this year, the Committee considered work priorities for the Council currently facilitated by this Unit, related to global sharing and solidarity.

Global Sharing and Solidarity

1. The Dignity and Rights of Children

The Unit IV Committee welcomed work done to elaborate an ecumenical strategy for promoting the dignity and rights of children as requested by the Central Committee in 1996 and encouraged further steps within this strategy which focus on:

- gathering information on actions being taken by churches and related agencies in support of children's rights;
- reflecting on the root causes of the marginalization of children in the context of globalization and external debt crisis;
- reviewing the approaches regarding the protection and participation of children, the theological and pastoral vision of childhood and the ministry of children who advocate with and on behalf of other children;
- encouraging the WCC member churches to contribute to the specific training needs of adults working with marginalized children.

Action I:

The Unit IV Committee recommended to the Central Committee that:

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child, the WCC:

- 1) - *encourage member churches to monitor the implementation of the convention on the Rights of the Child by their governments;*
 - *urge member churches together with their ecumenical agencies and partners to present independent information to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in their country;*
 - *work with member churches and ecumenical partners to facilitate a consultation of children and adults working with marginalised children by the year 2000, to evaluate the implementation of the Convention in their countries and the role played by churches to create new attitudes and conditions in favour of marginalized children;*
- 2) - *address the many and complex issues surrounding the question of child labour, considering seriously the perspective of children;*
 - *develop an ecumenical strategy and statement calling for the improvement of child worker conditions to be presented in Harare;*
 - *support the child workers in the process of reviewing the existing international legislation with appropriate legal representation and combating the exploitative and abusive forms of child labour.*

Ellen Pye was glad that mention was made of the different categories of children but noted the absence of reference to child soldiers. As there was a move to raise the age of conscription to 18, she felt the WCC should ask the churches to support that effort in any way possible. She proposed an amendment to the recommendation as follows:

In view of the damage done to children, their development and the future wellbeing of their community: that the WCC

- *ask its member churches to encourage their national governments to support the addition to the Convention on the Rights of the Child of a clause raising the age of conscription to 18 years.*

The Central Committee **voted in favour** of this amendment.

Bishop Serapion noted that Unit IV was a member of the international NGO on the Convention of the Rights of the Child sub-group on Refugee Children and Children in Armed Conflict; it had supported the study on child soldiers coordinated by this body, and participated in the development of the protocol to change the minimum age of recruitment to 18 years.

Ms Nontawasee pointed to another institution vital in dealing with children - that of the family, its role in caring for children as they develop and in terms of growing self-awareness. Secondly, she noted that no mention was made specifically of the children of refugees, migrants and displaced people. Was the Unit involved in work with these children also? An organisation that might be a partner for Unit IV especially in terms of providing information was End Child Prostitution (ECP).

Bishop Serapion affirmed that the Refugee and Migration Service of Unit IV had given priority to children through its networks, in and with churches, the UNHCR and the NGO mentioned above. The role of the family in addressing children's issues was being encouraged in Unit IV's work with children.

Metr. Chrysostomos felt it was important to add that the WCC must condemn any kind of violence, including sexual violation of children by men. Bishop Serapion felt that the text implied the inclusion of all kinds of violation and violence, so it was not necessary to add an additional sentence here.

The Central Committee **agreed** to the above recommendations.

2. Liberation from the Oppression of Unpayable Debts

Dr Jochen Motte, (United Evangelical Mission) introduced a resolution on economic rights and liberation from unpayable debts, noting that many churches and church-related groups were supporting a new campaign for debt relief, based on the tradition of Jubilee. Although such a body could not solve all questions related to the globalisation process, it was a concrete step

towards changing unjust structures, and would help express the concerns of the churches on the issue. Many member churches of WCC, especially in Africa and Asia, wanted to participate in the campaign. The Unit IV Committee felt it would be important for the WCC and its member churches to take up the issue and to function as a facilitator in order to integrate these efforts into the broader context of globalisation.

Ms Anne Pettifor, director of "Jubilee 2000", gave an illustrated presentation describing her work. Jubilee 2000 had now become a movement rather than a campaign, and was gaining widespread interest around the world. It worked closely with the World Bank and IMF on the issue of debt relief, as well as with various other bodies. She was calling on the WCC to urge its member churches to support this movement, and to make it a feature at the Harare Assembly with its Jubilee theme. A global petition calling for debt relief was being organised, and 14 million signatures were being sought.

The resolution was as follows:

The Unit IV Committee recognized and welcomed the substantial initiatives being taken by member churches and ecumenical partners around the world to address the issue of unpayable debts. The question of debt was not only an economic issue but a profoundly ethical problem. The social costs of the debt burden were passed on to the poor people of the debtor countries, creating more poverty and dehumanization.

The Unit IV Commission and Committee support and encourage the WCC's efforts to coordinate the work of churches and ecumenical partners on the issue of globalization, and the debt crisis as a part of it. The Committee also urged the WCC to encourage churches in all regions to become informed about these issues and to develop strategies appropriate to their contexts.

Action II:

Within the framework of the Council's work on globalization, social movements and exclusion (coordinated in Unit III), the Unit IV Committee recommended to Central Committee that the WCC facilitate member churches, in cooperation with ecumenical partners:

- *to develop an ecumenical action plan in support of the cancellation of foreign debt for the poorest countries by the year 2000 - the Jubilee year of release, and*
- *to work together, within this action plan, to develop a joint statement*

by the churches for adoption by the Eighth Assembly in Harare in 1998.

Ms Gcabashe was grateful for this resolution and urged that everyone take part in the effort to highlight the debt problem; the constant feeling of indebtedness was so demeaning to the people of the countries affected by it.

Ms Rantakari was also appreciative of this concrete proposal, noting that economic justice was one of the highest priorities on the agenda of churches in countries like Tanzania where she lived. She asked for more information about the actions planned in this connection.

Bishop Serapion responded that a seminar on globalisation was planned for early 1998 to study interlinkages between debt, structural adjustment programmes and world trade. This discussion and its follow-up would furnish ecumenical partners with the ethical and theological perspective of the churches and help towards establishing a statement on debt, and on globalisation as a whole, for the Harare Assembly. With this analysis in place, efforts would be made to create points of dialogue with the financial institutions - World Bank, IMF, and WTO.

Secondly, reflection, analysis and advocacy towards structural change would be complemented by manifesting in visible and practical ways God's option for the poor who are suffering daily because of the debt burden. We will seek to manifest our solidarity with the poor - praying, fasting, lobbying and campaigning for the elimination of unpayable debts for the poorest countries by the year 2000 - the jubilee year of release.

These two lines of approach would bring to the Jubilee assembly a focal point of prophetic witness, bringing together ecumenical partners, enabling them to take on the work, and seeking to build bridges between churches and others such as the movement for Jubilee 2000.

The Central Committee **agreed** to the above recommendation.

3. Resolution on the Ministry with Uprooted People

Today, churches are engaged in ministry and advocacy with uprooted people. Ecumenical organizations work closely with churches and networks coordinate church responses both nationally and regionally. The 1997 *Ecumenical Year of Churches in Solidarity with Uprooted People* had already further expanded this church commitment and involvement.

The WCC now served as a focal point for global networking, resource sharing, activity coordination and international advocacy for an emerging "ecumenical movement in solidarity with uprooted people".

Action III:

The Unit IV Committee recommended that Central Committee:

- *commend the many member churches which have incorporated the 1995 WCC Statement on Uprooted People into their life and ministry and initiated activities to celebrate the 1997 Ecumenical Year of Churches in Solidarity with the Uprooted;*
- *urge all churches to take up its challenge to "choose to risk to be with uprooted people" by implementing the 1995 statement and initiating public activities of solidarity, taking on the challenge of becoming the Church of the Stranger;*
- *invite member churches and related ecumenical organizations to develop a global church strategy to support the human dignity and survival right of uprooted people;*
- *ask the WCC to coordinate and facilitate this ongoing process, in order to further assist and enable member churches to effectively advocate in solidarity with refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons.*

Dr Park Jong Wha proposed that the words "and survival right" be added to the text of the third point above.

The Central Committee **agreed** to the above recommendation as amended.

4. Ecumenical Resource Sharing Instruments

"Jubilee imagery is both visionary and pragmatic. We should not talk about Jubilee too much as an ideal or visionary society of the future but rather about Jubilee as it could be understood today as a social mechanism for correcting the worst injustices. With this in mind, we need as a council in the future to work together to develop contemporary mechanisms and instruments of sharing which will promote fellowship, witness and solidarity" (Unit IV Commission).

The Unit Committee affirmed the importance given in the programme evaluation to the issue of resource sharing for the life of our churches, and the importance within the ecumenical movement of the WCC's mediating and facilitating role in Round tables, Regional groups and, more broadly, in implementing the ESR system. It was the unique role of

the WCC to encourage new understanding and ways of sharing among the churches and ecumenical partners, to uphold the ethical values of that system, and to safeguard the special place given within it to practical solidarity with the marginalized and excluded.

The Unit Committee affirmed the distinctive role played by regional secretaries in carrying out this function for the Council, and supported a strong description of this ongoing responsibility of the regional secretaries in the new structure.

The Unit Committee also affirmed the unique role and specialized service administered and coordinated globally by the WCC through the resource sharing system for churches working with uprooted people.

The Unit IV Committee noted the special potential of Round Tables as a process for promoting conciliar ecumenism, on the local level, and especially through practical actions of solidarity.

Action IV:

The Unit IV Committee recommended to Central Committee

- *that the Executive Committee receive, through regular progress reports, the implementation of the Round Table review, in order to monitor and assess the potential of this instrument for the new vision of the WCC.*

The Central Committee agreed.

5. National Councils of Churches

The Unit Committee was appreciative of the very significant role played by NCCs as partners within the one ecumenical movement. The Council's work in promoting sharing and solidarity was closely bound up with the ministry of these councils and in many cases would be seriously weakened without the coordinating and facilitating role of these councils at national level. The Unit IV Committee welcomed the many efforts currently being made in these councils to achieve self-reliance and to courageously review their own vision and vocation in order to adapt to the new challenges.

Action V:

The Unit IV Committee requested the Central Committee, in light of the serious difficulties being faced by many NCCs especially in Africa, and mindful of the pivotal role being played by NCCs in the conciliar

movement,

- *to urge member churches to express their solidarity with NCCs through prayer and practical action.*

The Central Committee **agreed**.

Note on the coherence of ecumenical bodies

The Unit IV Committee commended the work being done through the leadership of the General Secretary to establish more coherence and cooperation between WCC and Regional Ecumenical Organisations. The Committee supported continued and intensified efforts in this direction within the framework of the Common Understanding and Vision process in order to improve the coherence between ecumenical bodies on national, regional and global level, maximizing their collective potential and minimizing duplication.

Conclusion

The Unit IV Committee expressed appreciation to the staff for their work over the past seven years, and wished them well in the preparations for a memorable Jubilee Assembly.

Dr Tolen expressed thanks to Unit IV Committee for its report, and drew attention to its message. There was a tendency - at least among African churches - to consider Unit IV as the one which provided financial support. But in this report Unit IV was showing that the CUV process was the right approach and if there were really a desire to work with the member churches, it must be based on the relationships maintained with them. The report showed that problems of debt, human dignity, rights of children, ecumenical relationships, were all being identified and discussed on the basis of relationships.

In his view, the CUV proposal that relationships, programmes, issues, should be taken together was illustrated in an excellent way by this Unit Committee, showing what should be held on to in order to be a Council serving the churches, listening to them and encouraging them in their work. It was also an illustration of how to make progress on the basis of CUV to work for the future.

The Central Committee **received** the report of the Unit IV Committee with appreciation.

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Moderator, His Holiness Aram, invited Ms Birgitta Rantakari, moderator of the Finance Committee, to present the report:

1. Financial Update

Following the September 1996 meeting of the Central Committee, finance staff had finalised the 1997 budget and presented it to the Finance Strategy Working Group (FSWG) in November. The FSWG gave consideration to future financial policy relating to the CUV process and how to move to a unified accounting and budget structure for the Council; it also reviewed income development strategy.

At the February 1997 Executive Committee, various budget models were considered and criteria laid down for a transitional budget for 1998.

The Executive Committee appointed Mr Robert Christeler as Executive Director of the new Department of Finance, Services and Administration which would come into being on 1 October 1997 on the retirement of Mr Davies; Mr Christeler joined the staff on 1 July. Mr John Irwin, Chief Accountant, left the WCC on 31 May.

Since February, finance staff had been occupied with the Financial Report and the preparation of a Revised Budget for 1998. The Finance Subcommittee and the FSWG held a joint meeting in July. Thereafter Mr Christeler took responsibility for the Finance Department, current year reporting and work on budget strategy from 1999 onwards, while Mr Davies was responsible for the 1996 Financial Report, the Revised Budget for 1998 and the Assembly Budget.

2. Financial Report 1996

The Committee considered the report and accounts for 1996. Mr Rath reported a slight improvement in the number of churches paying membership contributions, but it was still only about 50%. There was likely to be a significant decrease in undesigned income in 1998 and even more in 1999 because of projected reductions by some of the larger member churches.

The Finance Committee recommended that Central Committee:

- *approve the Financial Report and Accounts for the year 1996;*

- agree that Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler, SA (KPMG), be reappointed auditors of the 1997 accounts of the World Council of Churches.

The Central Committee agreed.

3. Finance Strategy Working Group (FSWG)

This group was set up by Central Committee in 1996 and had met several times. Its initial task included assisting to balance the 1997 budget; it then gave attention to the CUV process and sought to offer income scenarios for the Council in the coming years; it would return to the financial implications of CUV after this CC meeting. The FSWG had also begun to look at future policies on income generation and investments.

4. Income Development Report

Mr Rath, Director of OICD, reported that the 1992 strategy paper on Income development, *Providing the Resources*, had been subjected to a detailed review as requested by Central Committee in 1996. An income development plan had been prepared which included some proposals for action. A further task would be to prepare a longer term strategy, paying special attention to developing undesignated income. Meanwhile it was clear that, as a foundation for income development, the image of the WCC and the communication of that image would need to be improved, as "Resources will follow a compelling vision". The culmination of the CUV process at the Assembly and the 50th Anniversary of the WCC offered an ideal opportunity for communication and special fundraising.

Projections showed that **membership contributions** and other non-designated income (UDI) may show slight improvement in 1997, whereas in 1998, because of some major reductions from donors, a fall back to 1996 levels could be expected. Exchange rates and good membership contributions from North America had helped stabilize the present situation. However, a little less than 50% of the member churches still made no membership contribution at all. It was suggested that churches be reminded of the ruling that subsidies would not be available for the Assembly and subsequent governing body meetings for representatives from churches not paying the minimum contribution.

Programme income was likely to drop by about CHF 570,000 (3%) between 1996 and 1997, and by CHF 725,000 (3%) between 1997 and 1998. Earlier improvements in exchange rates uplifted the income projections for 1998, but because of reductions announced in August 1997

by one major agency, programme income in 1998 would suffer more than expected.

A decline in income was reported from the German churches and agencies as well as from Swedish church partners, reasons for which included a move away from organised religion, changes in legislation regarding church taxes and status, and aging populations. Contributions for programme activities had been greatly reduced or diverted by some major agencies in the north. However, the economic situation in Canada and the United States seemed to be stabilizing.

With regard to the **Income Development Plan**, there was a serious downward trend in the Council's income which must be addressed. Activities could not be sustained at the level of recent years. The Churches must own the WCC, with all the benefits and responsibilities which that implied. Relationships with churches, partner agencies and individuals must be improved. One approach was to develop strategies to facilitate this on a regional basis; this should give rise to new opportunities which need to be vigorously pursued. The role of advocacy and public relations in fund-raising would need to be developed.

The Finance Committee concluded that the Council would have to learn to live and work within a new financial reality in the coming years. Programmatic income was unlikely to increase. Core work must be supported from member church contributions (which need to be increased substantially) and from internally generated sources (such as investments, production, property), which did not fluctuate so greatly. Programme related income was much less secure and the Council must operate flexibly in order to be able to react swiftly both to opportunities and to danger signals.

Income development strategy would require an all-out effort to communicate the vision and reality of the Council's work, to increase the commitment and support of churches and supporting agencies, and addressing those who might support more specific goals. The Finance Committee recommended that:

- *the Central Committee recognise the efforts being made to develop the Council's income and encourage the General Secretary to call a regular "WCC Round Table" to inform and consult principal funding partners and to seek their pledges of financial support.*

The Central Committee agreed.

5. Update on the Current Year

Mr Christeler reported on the situation at 30 June, noting that the first full quarterly closing would be done at the end of September. Efforts to reduce costs had borne fruit: in the first six months of 1997, both income and expenditure on general operating accounts were under budget. Programme activities expenditure was also down, but income was seriously below budget though it was recognised that this type of income was less predictable and tended to come in late in the year. Once the CUV process and resulting new structures and priorities were clear, it was hoped that confidence and support would stabilise.

The General Secretary had called a consultation in April with key funding partners, and hoped to hold "WCC Round Tables" on a regular basis to seek more consistent support. Concern was expressed that the Council had become too dependent on a small number of key agencies. The Finance Committee agreed:

- a) that there should be no relaxation of restraints on expenditure,
- b) that a re-assessment of income and resources should be made available to enable OICD to monitor contributions more closely,
- c) that new management tools, such as full quarterly closings, should be encouraged. It was hoped that the proposed reorganisation of finance staff would facilitate this.

Addressing Central Committee, Mr Christeler said that more care was needed in adjusting expense levels to anticipated income. Income must be monitored on a constant base in order to respond to new situations developing and to react rapidly to new developments. The environment was changing rapidly and strategies must be developed to respond to these promptly. In future the Council's performance would be monitored quarterly and new tools would be developed to adjust activity levels to income expectations; this implied integrated planning, taking various factors into account in order to plot overall strategies. He expressed appreciation to Central Committee for making the necessary decisions which would provide a firmer basis for future work by staff.

6. Revised Budget 1998

Mr Davies explained the new style budget which had been prepared for this transitional Assembly year. In February the Executive Committee had agreed new criteria and the version finalised at end August and presented for approval was effectively balanced. However, the data was constantly changing and any budget would need regular revision and monitoring,

rendered simpler with the quarterly closings currently being instituted.

Regarding investments, it was reported that performance had been consistently good and in some years exceptional since the changes made after Canberra. In 1994 investment performance had been universally poor, but the Council's problems that year had stemmed from currency exchange. Presentation had been clarified (cf. Financial Reports of the last two years). The agreed investment in EDCS had been made. The Finance Committee recommended that the Central Committee:

- *approve the Revised Budget for 1998* (see Appendix VII);
- *instruct the Finance Committee and staff to take the necessary steps, in light of changing circumstances, to ensure that there be no operating shortfall in 1998.*

The Central Committee agreed.

7. Eighth Assembly Budget

This continued to be reviewed. A further amount of CHF 750,000 was needed to reach income targets, without taking account of the fact that the contingency sum budgeted remained well below the required 10%. An exercise in correlating the Assembly Budget and the main WCC budget in 1998 would be undertaken before the next meeting of the Executive.

Dr Granberg-Michaelson expressed concern about the Assembly budget, pointing out that a contribution had been made from that budget to the 1998 general budget; he was also concerned about the low figure allocated to contingencies. Should there be a shortfall in either budget at the end of 1998, he urged that the Assembly budget not be the one to suffer - the most important thing for the Council was to have a successful Assembly.

8. Audit Committee

The Finance Committee noted the proposed new mandate for the Audit Committee and agreed to bring it to Central Committee for approval. It noted that Mr J.-C. Ecklin would retire at the end of 1997. The moderator, Mr John Briggs, had met two prospective members for the Audit Committee and recommended that their names be submitted to the Central Committee for approval; the Committee also asked that thanks be expressed to Mr Ecklin.

The Finance Committee recommended that the Central Committee:

- *approve the proposed new Mandate for the Audit Committee (see Appendix VIII);*
- *approve the appointment of Mr Alan Bittener and Mr James G. Pittendrigh to the Audit Committee, note the retirement of Mr J.-C. Ecklin and express its thanks to him for his long service on the Audit Committee.*

The Central Committee **agreed**.

9. Investment Advisory Group

At the last meeting of Central Committee, new Investment Policy Guidelines were approved subject to clarification of the point regarding the proportion of investment in ethically undesirable activities, where it was suggested that this be reduced from 10% to 5% of any given company's business. Having received advice from the Investment Advisory Group, which felt that it would prove almost impossible for managers to monitor activities representing less than 10% of an organisation's business, the Finance Committee recommended:

- *that Central Committee approve Investment Policy Guideline 1 as follows:*
1. *The WCC shall not invest in enterprises which derive more than 10 per cent of their annual turnover from the following activities:*
 - * *nuclear weapons research and development, production and supply of key components for nuclear warheads, and/or the operation of nuclear power plants;*
 - * *research and development, production and supply of biological and chemical weapons;*
 - * *research and development, production and supply of armaments;*
 - * *production of liquor or tobacco;*
 - * *gambling.*

The WCC shall also not invest in corporations which:

- * *apply discriminatory employment policies;*
- * *de facto support violations of human rights;*
- * *contribute directly to environmental destruction.*

[Nestlé S.A. has been singled out as a company in which the WCC shall not invest because of the company's repeated breaches of the 1981 World Health Organization International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes].

The Central Committee agreed.

10. Retirement Fund

The Finance Committee learned that the Executive Committee had appointed Dr Georges Tsetsis to the vacant position on the Retirement Fund Board. It received an encouraging report from the Board. The accounts for 1996 showed a sound financial position and adequate resources to cover its liabilities. The pensions of surviving spouses (widows and widowers of members) had been increased from 50% to 60% of the member's pension entitlement.

11. Future Financial Policy

The Finance Committee discussed the situation relating to 1999 and beyond. Mr Christeler explained the new approach to financial planning by suggesting a number of models on which to base future budgets. These models, with associated monitoring procedures, would aid the budget development process, and would include: WCC internal income, undesignated contributions and general designated income. Expenditure was either staff related or non-staff related.

Various models could then be produced based on various assumptions such as the anticipated staff level, inflation, investment income, property, compensation and non-staff expenses. Depending on the data provided, a variety of budget scenarios could be produced. He explained the process for building a preliminary 1999 budget for consideration by the Executive Committee in February and a revised budget for September.

The Finance Committee wished to seek the Central Committee's support for the new process of budget building to ensure that planning for programmes, staffing and resources were fully integrated at every stage.

Mr Christeler expressed anxiety about the shortfall in activities funding in the current year up to 31 August and indicated that activities might have to be curtailed as a matter of urgency unless the situation righted itself in the near future. The Committee expressed its conviction that income, particularly for activities, would continue to decline in the immediate future and that, even though the General accounts appeared to

be in balance in 1997 and 1998, the financial position of the Council would inevitably be jeopardised by any major decline in income for specific programmatic activities.

The Committee asked the Moderator and other members of the Executive Committee's CUV sub-group to draw to the attention of that group and of the Central Committee at its closed session, as appropriate:

- the need for fully integrated planning - programme, staffing and finances - in the implementation of the CUV process;
- the need to ensure the availability of long-term financial support before any vacancies were filled or contracts extended.

The Finance Committee recommended that the Central Committee:

- *note that budget models have been prepared for the re-structured Council,*
- *encourage the process of developing a new style of integrated and unified budget, and*
- *ask that a preliminary budget for 1999 be presented to the Executive Committee in February 1998 and that a revised budget for 1999 be presented for approval to the Executive Committee in September 1998.*

The Central Committee agreed.

This being the final meeting of the Finance and Central Committees, Ms Rantakari expressed her thanks for the leadership of Michael Davies in the period since Canberra, and welcomed Robert Christeler to the staff finance team. She also expressed appreciation to the Central Committee for entrusting her and her fellow Finance Committee members with the challenge of providing advice and direction; finally, she thanked the members of the Finance Committee for their dedication and hard work.

On behalf of the Central Committee, Mr Allsop expressed thanks to members of the Finance Committee and its leadership for their commitment to this work over the past six years.

The Central Committee received the report of the Finance Committee with appreciation.

STAFFING REPORT

In a closed session on Friday 19 September 1997, the Moderator invited Dr Nababan as moderator of the Staffing and Nominations Committee to present the Staffing Report.

Dr Nababan indicated that a number of contract extensions had been recommended by the Executive Committee for approval by the Central Committee.

Ms Rantakari pointed out that the previous day the Central Committee had made a number of decisions in relation to the Common Understanding and Vision process providing a new framework for future work, and the next step was to work towards integrated planning. It was also important to ensure that long term finances were available before any staff positions were filled or extended. She asked whether the necessary financial support was available for the positions under consideration.

The General Secretary spoke of the difficulty of assessing the Council's financial perspectives for 1999 and beyond, but they had worked on the assumption that it would be necessary to work with a reduced core staff team. A careful review had been made of the proposed contract extensions, and it was hoped that financial resources would be sufficient to cover the costs involved.

Dr Granberg-Michaelson was concerned at the lack of clear projections of income for 1999, noting that despite requests for integrated programme and staffing, this had not yet materialised. If the Central Committee was serious about taking the next steps forward from the CUV to its sustainable implementation, he believed it should insist that income, staff numbers, programme and budget be integrated and that such a plan be presented to the Executive in February 1998. He moved the following motion:

"The Central Committee instructs the General Secretary to present to the Executive Committee in February 1998 an operational plan for the functioning of the WCC through 1999 and beyond, including the following:

- a) a new budgetary framework;*
- b) clear projections of income for 1999 and beyond; by type of income;*
- c) anticipated numbers of staff for 1999 and beyond;*
- d) a preliminary proposal for allocation of staff to various teams and functions."*

Dr Tolen supported the motion, adding that when defining the staff needed to carry out the work, job descriptions should be carefully considered. It should not be assumed that present staff can simply be transferred to new positions. Dr Raiser explained that until CC had made the decisions regarding CUV, he had not been in a position to define what staff positions would be needed after 1998.

The Central Committee **agreed** to the above recommendation.

Dr Nababan presented the Staffing Report as follows:

The Central Committee authorised the General Secretary to proceed with the following contract extensions, the legal obligations of the World Council of Churches to be binding only as from the actual signing by both parties of the corresponding contract extensions.

A. CONTRACT EXTENSIONS

All contract extensions listed below are for three years unless otherwise stated:

UNIT I

- Ms Evelyn **Appiah** (Ghana, Methodist Church) Executive Secretary, Lay Participation towards Inclusive Community, **for two years** from 1 February 1999 (will complete 31.5 years' service)
- Rev. Alan **Falconer** (UK, Church of Scotland) Director, Faith and Order, from 1 February 1999 (will complete 7 years' service)
- Rev. Dr Dagmar **Heller** (FRG, EKD [United]) Executive Secretary, **for 1 year** from 1 October 1998 (will complete 6 years 6 months' service)

UNIT II

- Rev. Ana **Langerak** (USA, Lutheran Church in Costa Rica) Executive Director, **for 18 months** from 1 January 1999 (will complete 7 years' service)
- Ms Teny **Pirri-Simonian** (Lebanon, Armenian Apostolic Church [Oriental]) Executive Secretary for Christian Education, from 1 January 1999 (will complete 15 years' service)

UNIT III

- Ms Salpy **Eskidjian** (Cyprus, Armenian Apostolic Church [Oriental]) Executive Secretary, International Affairs, from 1 February 1999 (will complete 7 years' service)

- Ms Edna **Orteza** (Philippines, United Church of Christ in the Philippines) Executive Secretary, Education for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, from 1 January 1999 (will complete 7 years' service)
- Rev. Dr Martin **Robra** (FRG, EKD [United]) Executive Secretary, ECOS, from 1 February 1999 (will complete 7 years 6 months' service)
- Ms Marilia **Schuller** (Brazil, Methodist Church in Brazil) Executive Secretary, Women under Racism, from 1 January 1999 (will complete 10 years' service)
- Rev. Bob **Scott** (Aotearoa-New Zealand, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia) Executive Secretary, Racial Justice, from 1 October 1998 (will complete 13 years' service)

UNIT IV

- Ms Carol **Abel** (UK, Church of Ireland [Anglican]) Coordinator, Information Management Systems Development, **for 2 years** from 1 January 1999 (will complete 7 years' service)
- Mr John **Doom** (French Polynesia, Evangelical Church of French Polynesia) Executive Secretary for the Pacific, **for 2 years 5 months** (until retirement) from 1 January 1999 (will complete 12 years 5 months' service)
- Mr Melaku **Kifle** (Ethiopia, Ethiopian Orthodox Church [Oriental]) Coordinator, Refugee and Migration Service, from 1 March 1999 (will complete 22 years 2 months' service)
- Ms Barbara **Maubach** (FRG, EKD [Lutheran]) Executive Secretary for Scholarships, **for 2 years 8 months** from 1 January 1999 (will complete 7 years' service)

ACT

- Mr Nils **Carstensen** (Denmark, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark) Executive Secretary, Emergencies Information Coordination and Media, **for two years** from 1 October 1998 (will complete 4 years' service)
- Ms Miriam **Lutz** (USA, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) Executive Secretary for Emergency and Rehabilitation (ACT Team Leader), from 1 January 1999 (will complete 6 years' service)

General Secretariat - Office of Communication

- Mr Stephen **Brown** (UK, United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom) Editor, Ecumenical Press (News) Service (ENI), from 1 March 1999 (will complete 8 years' service)
- Mr Edmund **Doogue** (Ireland, Church of England [Anglican]) Editor,

Ecumenical Press (News) Service (ENI) from 1 January 1999 (will complete 8 years' service)

OICD

- Ms Anu **Talvivaara** (Finland, Orthodox Church of Finland [Eastern]) Associate Director, **for 1 year 8 months** from 1 January 1999 (will complete 10 years' service)

CIS

- Mr David **Pozzi-Johnson** (USA, Evangelical Covenant Church in America) Director, **for two years** from 1 October 1998 (will complete 10 years' service)

B. VACANCIES

The Central Committee **approved** the following vacancies:

General Secretariat - Office of the General Secretary

- Deputy General Secretary

Communication Department

- Director

C. AUTHORISATION

At the request of the Executive Committee, the Central Committee authorised the Executive Committee to fill urgent vacancies that must be filled prior to the next meeting of Central Committee.

D. INFORMATION

The Executive Committee at its meeting in February 1997 agreed the following appointments and contract extensions:

1. Appointments

General Secretariat - Finance and Administration

- Mr Robert **Christeler** (Switzerland, Swiss Protestant Church Federation) as Executive Director for Finance and Administration for four years from an agreed date

2. Ratification of Appointment by the Officers at their meeting in December 1996:

General Secretariat - Ecumenical Institute, Bossey

- Dr Heidi **Hadsell** (USA, Presbyterian Church [USA]) as Director for four years from an agreed date

3. Contract Extensions

All recommendations marked with * are provisional and should be reviewed in September 1997.

UNIT I

- Rev. Prof. Dr Thomas **FitzGerald** (USA, Ecumenical Patriarchate, Archdiocese of America [Eastern]) Executive Director, for 6 months from 1 July 1998 (will complete 4 years 6 months' service)
- Mr John **McVie** (UK, Church of Scotland) Finance Officer, for 9 months from 1 April 1998 (will complete 20 years 6 months' service)*
- Dr Judo **Poerwowidagdo** (Indonesia, Javanese Christian Churches in Central Java) Executive Secretary, for 4 months from 1 September 1998 (will complete 8 years 4 months' service)

UNIT II

- Rev. Samuel **Ada** (Togo, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Togo) Executive Secretary for Evangelism - the decision of the Officers in May 1996 to extend Mr Ada's contract for 1 year to be amended to an extension for 6 months only from 1 September 1997 (will complete 4 years 6 months' service)
- Rev. Ana **Langerak** (USA, Lutheran Church in Costa Rica) Executive Director, for 6 months from 1 July 1998 (will complete 5 years 6 months' service) *
- Ms Teny **Pirri-Simonian** (Lebanon, Armenian Apostolic Church [Oriental]) Executive Secretary for Christian Education, for 6 months from 1 July 1998 (will complete 12 years' service) *
- Fr Dr Ioan **Sauca** (Romania, Romanian Orthodox Church [Eastern]) Executive Secretary for Orthodox Studies and Relationship in Mission, for 3 years from 1 June 1998 (will complete 7 years' service)

UNIT III

- Rev. Dwain **Epps** (USA, Presbyterian Church [USA]) Executive Secretary, Public Issues/International Affairs, for 2 years from 1 August 1998 (will complete 8 years 7 months' service)
- Ms Aruna **Gnanadason** (India, Church of South India) Executive Secretary, Women, for 3 years from 1 June 1998 (will complete 10 years' service)
- Rev. Samuel **Kobia** (Kenya, Methodist Church in Kenya) Executive Director, for 2 years from 1 September 1998 (will complete 7 years' service)
- Mr Michel **Monjol** (France, Roman Catholic Church) Finance Officer, for 9 months from 1 April 1998 (will complete 20 years 6 months' service) *

UNIT IV

- Mr Alexander **Belopopsky** (UK, Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople [Eastern]) Executive Secretary for Europe, for 3 years from 1 February 1998 (will complete 5 years' service)
- Rev. Myra **Blyth** (UK, Baptist Union of Great Britain) Executive Director, for 3 years from 1 June 1998 (will complete 13 years 3 months' service)
- Mr John **Doom** (French Polynesia, Evangelical Church of French Polynesia) Executive Secretary for the Pacific, for 1 year from 1 January 1998 (will complete 10 years' service)
- Ms Barbara **Maubach** (FRG, EKD [Lutheran]) Executive Secretary for Scholarships, for 4 months from 1 September 1998 (will complete 4 years 4 months' service) *
- Dr Helene **Moussa** (Canada, Coptic Orthodox Church [Oriental]) Executive Secretary for Uprooted People, for 5 months from 1 June 1998 (will complete 4 years 5 months' service)
- Dr Kyung Seo **Park** (Korea, Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea [PROK]) Executive Secretary for Asia, for 2 years from 1 April 1998 (will complete 18 years' service)
- Mr Patrick **Taran** (USA, Society of Friends General Conference) Executive Secretary for Migration, for 6 months from 1 July 1998 (will complete 8 years 6 months' service) *

ECLOF

- Mr Francis Muhungi **Kanyoro** (Kenya, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania) Director, for 2 years from 1 April 1998 (will complete 11 years 2 months' service)

General Secretariat - Office of the General Secretary

- Ms Jeanne **Becher** (USA, The Episcopal Church [Anglican]) Assistant to the General Secretary, for 2 years nine months (until retirement) from 1 April 1998 (will complete 21 years 2 months' service)

Ecumenical Institute, Bossey

- Dr Beate **Stierle** (FRG, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover) Tutor/ Executive Secretary, for 4 months from 1 September 1998 (will complete 7 years 4 months' service)

Church and Ecumenical Relations

- Ms Jean **Stromberg** (USA, American Baptist Churches in the USA) Director, US Office, for 3 years from 1 September 1998 (will complete 17 years' service)

Interreligious Relations

- Dr Tarek **Mitri** (Lebanon, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East [Eastern]) Executive Secretary, (Christian-Muslim and Traditional Religions), for 3 years from 1 May 1998 (will complete 10 years' service)

Communication Department

- Mr Jan **Kok** (Netherlands, The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) Director, for 8 months from 1 May 1998 (will complete 25 years 8 months' service) *
- Rev. John **Newbury** (UK, Methodist Church) Press and Information Officer, for 6 months from 1 July 1998 (will complete 5 years 6 months' service) *

Finance and Administration

- Ms Margaret **Reid** (UK, Church of England [Anglican]) Deputy Chief Accountant, for 3 years from 1 April 1998 (will complete 11 years 7 months' service)

Office for Income Coordination and Development

- Mr Günter **Rath** (FRG, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria [EKD]) Director, for 2 years from 1 June 1998 (will complete 10 years' service)

Personnel Department

- Rev. Carlos **Sintado** (Argentina, Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina) Director, for 2 years from 1 July 1998 (will complete 19 years 6 months' service)

Library

- Mr Pierre **Beffa** (Switzerland, Roman Catholic Church) Director, for 3 years from 1 September 1998 (will complete 35 years 2 months' service)

4. Arrivals

It was reported that the following staff members took up their appointments on the dates indicated:

General Secretariat

- Mr Robert **Christeler** (Switzerland, Swiss Protestant Church Federation), Executive Director for Finance and Administration, on 1 July 1997.

Ecumenical Institute, Bossey

- Dr Heidi **Hadsell** (USA, Presbyterian Church [USA]) Director, on 15 August 1997.
- Father Serapio **Kabazzi-Kisirinya** (Uganda, Roman Catholic Church) Professor, on 16 September 1996.

UNIT III

- Mr Freddy **Knutsen** (Norway, Church of Norway) Executive Secretary, Youth, on 6 January 1997.

5. Departures

It was reported that the following staff members had left, or would leave, the service of the World Council on the dates indicated:

UNIT I

- Mr John **McVie** (UK, Church of Scotland) Finance Officer, on 31 December 1997 (will complete 16 years 10 months' service)
- Rev. Ofelia **Ortega-Montoya** (Cuba, Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba) Executive Secretary, on 31 March 1997 (will complete 11 years 7 months' service)

UNIT II

- Rev. Samuel **Ada** (Togo, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Togo) Executive Secretary for Evangelism, on 28 February 1998 (will complete 4 years 6 months' service)
- Rev. Dr Christopher **Duraisingh** (India, Church of South India) Executive Secretary, Gospel and Culture, on 31 May 1997 (will complete 7 years 9 months' service)
- Dr Erlinda **Senturias** (Philippines, United Church of Christ in the Philippines) Executive Secretary, Health, on 31 July 1997 (will complete 8 years' service)

UNIT III

- Ms Thembisile **Majola** (South Africa, Church of the Province of Southern Africa [Anglican]) Executive Secretary for Women and Development, on 31 July 1997 (will complete 4 years' service)
- Dr Deborah **Robinson** (USA, Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.) Executive Secretary, Racial Justice Issues, on 31 January 1997 (completed 4 years 1 month's service)
- Mr Robert **Van Drimmelen** (Netherlands, The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) Executive Secretary, Economic Issues, on 30 April 1997 (will complete 14 years 3 months' service)

UNIT IV

- Ms Pamela **Greet** (Australia, Anglican Church of Australia) Executive Secretary for Emergencies Preparedness, on 31 August 1997 (completed 5 years 2 months' service)

General Secretariat - Office of the General Secretary

- Rev. Dr Wesley **Ariarajah** (Sri Lanka, Methodist Church) Deputy General Secretary, on 31 August 1997 (completed 16 years 8 months' service)
- Rev. Michael **Davies** (UK, United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom) Assistant General Secretary for Finance and Administration, on 30 September 1997 (will complete 7 years 1 month's service)

Ecumenical Institute, Bossey

- Archimandrite Athanase **Chatzopoulos** (Greece, Church of Greece [Eastern Orthodox]) Lecturer/Executive Secretary, on 31 December 1997 (will complete 3 years 3 months' service)
- Dr Jacques **Nicole** (Switzerland, Swiss Protestant Church Federation) Director, on 30 June 1997 (completed 7 years' service)

Finance

- Mr John **Irwin** (UK, Church of England) Chief Accountant, on 31 May 1997 (completed 1 year 11 months' service)

CIS

- Mr Armand **Laurent** (Switzerland, Swiss Protestant Church Federation) Supervisor, on 30 April 1997 (completed 20 years 2 months' service)

6. Consultants

- a) It was reported that the following consultants were appointed by the General Secretary since the last Central Committee meeting in September 1996:

UNIT II

- Sister Elizabeth **Moran** (UK, Roman Catholic Church) Roman Catholic Consultant, on 1 January 1997.

UNIT III

- Ms Anna **Akerlund** (Sweden, Church of Sweden) as Decade Festival Consultant for 1 years 4 months from 15 August 1997

UNIT IV

- Mr William **Temu** (Tanzania, Roman Catholic Church) Round Table Consultant, for one year from 11 December 1996.

Office of Finance and Administration - CIS

- Mr Robert **Varga** (Switzerland, Roman Catholic Church) for 7 months from 1 September 1997 (will complete 14 years 3 months' service)

b) It was reported that the following consultants had left the service of the World Council of Churches on the dates indicated:

UNIT II

- Dr William **Cook** (Argentina, Methodist Church in Brazil) Consultant, Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, on 30 April 1997 (will complete 2 years 1 month's service)
- Sister Monica **Cooney** (Aotearoa/New Zealand, Roman Catholic Church) Roman Catholic Consultant, on 31 December 1996 (completed 7 years' service)
- Dr Eva **Ombaka** (Tanzania, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania) Technical Adviser on Pharmaceuticals, on 30 June 1997 (will complete 5 years 6 months' service)

UNIT III

- Ms Donnalie **Edwards** (Antigua and Barbuda, Church of the Province of the West Indies (Anglican)) Consultant, Youth, on 31 March 1997 (will complete three years 2 months' service)
- Ms Nicole **Fischer** (Switzerland, Swiss Protestant Church Federation) Consultant, Mid Decade, on 28 February 1997 (will complete 11 years 11 months' service)

The Staffing Report was received with appreciation.

Responding to a question about the high number of Roman Catholic staff, the General Secretary explained that most of these were in secretarial or administrative positions. The Council was obliged to recruit Swiss staff, and a proportion of these were Roman Catholics. In the case of the few executive staff positions held by Roman Catholics, the RCC was of course consulted or involved in making the appointments.

Thanks were expressed to staff of the Personnel Office for their work during this difficult period.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

1998: February 17-20	Executive Committee	Geneva
September 15-18, 19-20	Executive Committee	Amsterdam, Netherlands
December 1-2	Executive Committee) Harare,
December	new Central Committee) Zimbabwe
1999: February? March?	Executive Committee	Geneva
August? September?)	Executive Committee	Geneva
)	Central Committee	Geneva

CLOSING ACTIONS

The Moderator referred to the farewell reception the previous evening when he had spoken to members of the Central Committee in appreciation for their support and hard work over the six years since Canberra. He was grateful for the sense of togetherness, the community of faith and hope that they had built up in the service of the one ecumenical movement.

The Moderator expressed thanks to the Officers for their support; to members of Central Committee for their participation in the deliberations and actions taken; to advisers, observers and other participants who had helped carry forward the considerable amount of work that had come before this Central Committee; to those who had acted as moderators of deliberative sessions; to the moderators and vice-moderators of the General Secretariat and Unit Committees; to the General Secretary, his Deputy, the Assistant General Secretary and the Assistant to the General Secretary.

The General Secretary then thanked all who had contributed to ensure the smooth running of the meeting, including:

- Mary Ann Lundy and Terry MacArthur for planning the worship,
- Janice Pozzi-Johnson for the painting in the chapel: *How I longed to gather you as a mother hen gathers her brood under her wings.*
- Conference Secretary Nan Braunschweiger
- Renate Sbeghen for organising the parish visits of 14 September
- the team of stewards under the staff leadership of Freddie Knutsen

- the interpreters and translators, coordinated by Joan Reilly and Joyce McNulty
- Andrée and Lino d'Alessandri and Robert Equey for the interpretation equipment
- Margot Wahl and Joan Haworth, responsible for the documents office
- the typing pool, under the leadership of Judith Kocher
- administrative staff in the General Secretariat: Brigitte Constant, Gudrun Smith, Ursula Zierl and Luzia Wehrle
- coordination with the cafeteria: Malle Niilus
- M. Eberl and his kitchen staff
- staff of the telephone/telex/telefax office under the leadership of Marie-Christine Gendre
- Yasmina Lebouachera and the cash office staff
- Libby Visinand, editor of Day by Day
- Heather Stunt and the staff of the WCC bookshop
- Peter Williams, photographer and Gaby Vuagniaux, responsible for photo distribution
- Bob Scott, plenary hall manager
- Gilbert Cudré-Mauroux for recordings
- Technical staff coordinated by José Mendez
- Minute writer Rosemary Green, assisted by Yvette Milosevic and Beatrice Bengtsson
- Travel arrangements: the Raptim staff
- David Pozzi-Jonson and Catherine Inoubli for computer services

CLOSING WORSHIP took place in the Chapel of the Ecumenical Centre. Bishop Okullu was to have preached the sermon but was unwell. In his place, Bishop Talbert led a meditation on John 12, 23-26.

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 Malabar, India
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Very Rev. Nicholas Apostola Orthodox Church in America	for Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky (16-19 Sept)
Rev. Dr Trond Bakkevig Church of Norway	for Bishop Bjorn Bue (deceased)
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Rev. Jorge Domingues Methodist Church in Brazil	for Bishop Ayres Mattos (19 Sept)
Rev. Hans Engdahl Church of Sweden	for Bishop Jonas Jonson (13-15 Sept)
Rev. Fernando Enns EKD, Germany	for Dr Margot Kässmann (19 Sept)
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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ISSUES AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

(* not present at this meeting)

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Mr John Briggs - *Vice-Moderator*

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- Rev. Ian Allsop
- * Mrs Khushnud Azariah
- * Barbara Bazett
- * Most Rev. Edmond Browning
- Fr Vsevolod Chaplin
- Rev. Dr Wesley Granberg-Michaelson
- Mrs Maryon Jägers
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- Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk
- Dr Günter Krusche
- Rev. Héctor Méndez
- * Mrs Faith Mwondha
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- Rt Rev. Dr Henry Okullu
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- Rev. Caroline Pattiasina-Toreh
- Most Rev. Michael Peers
- Ms Vidhya Rani
- * Bishop Jan Szarek
- Bishop Melvin Talbert
- Dr Aaron Tolen
- Rev. Dr Eugene Turner
- Dr Daniel Weiss
- Mrs Tungane Williams

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Dr Pamela Chinnis (for Bishop E. Browning)
 Rev. Joan Parrott (for Rev. Dr D. Weiss)
 Ellen Pye (for Barbara Bazett)

Adviser:

Rev. Dr Robert Welsh

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 Dr Nenevi Seddoh - *Acting Moderator*
 Rev. Dr Paul A. Crow, Jr. - *Acting Vice-Moderator*

Dr Anna Marie Aagaard

- * Dr Charles Adams
 Dr Mihály Almásy
 Metr. Athanasios of Heliopolis
 Metropolitan Elias Audi
- * Prof. Dr André Birmelé
 Rev. Dr Karel Blei
 Archbishop Nerses Bozabalian
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- * Mrs Sri Winarti Soedjatmoko
- * Archbishop Timotheos

Dr Anne Tveter
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 Archimandrite Nestor Zhiliaev

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 Rev. Marcel Manoel (for Prof. Dr A. Birmelé)
 Rev. Tyrone Pitts (for Dr C. Adams)
 Bishop Michael Stephen (for Bishop A. Omodunbi)

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 Rev. Arne Fritzson
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 Bishop Ambrosius of Oulu - *Vice-Moderator*

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 The Rev. Levi Okang'a Akhura
 Bishop Vinton Anderson
 Rev. Andreas Anggui
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- * Pastor E. Farfán Figueroa
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- * Ms Olga Ganaba
 Dr Maxine Garrett
 Mrs Makiko Hirata
 Rev. Edea Kidu
 Dr Birgitta Larsson
 Ms Maryssa Mapanao-Camaddo
- * Mr Michel Moukouyou-Kimbouala
 Dr Irmela Müller-Stöver
- * Ms Beatrice Odonkor

- Frau Christine Oettel
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 * Dr Elsie Philip
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 * Mrs Patricia Scoutas
 * His Holiness Pope Shenouda
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 Drs Aukje Westra
 Rev. Maran Zau Yaw

Substitutes:

- Rev. Dr Hilarion Alfeyev (for Mrs O. Ganaba)
 Rev. David Asante Dartey (for Ms B. Odonkor)
 Dr Kyriaki FitzGerald (for Ms P. Scoutas)

Unit Advisers:

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 Rev. Donald Elliott
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- * Rev. Wali Fejo
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- Most Rev. John Ghose
- Citoyen Tusange Katonia
- Bishop Lavrentije of Sabac-Valjevo
- Dr Shirley Liddell
- Mr Peter Lodberg
- Dr Janice Love
- Mrs Jan Malpas
- Ms Priyanka Mendis
- Rev. Dr Donald Miller
- Rev. Dr Matitsoane Moseme
- Very Rev. J. Omoyajowo
- * Rev. Valamotu Palu
- Dr Park Jong-Wha
- Archpriest V. Petliuchenko
- * Pastor José da Silveira Salvador
- * Pastor Carlos Sanchez
- Ms Kristine Thompson
- * Pasteur Amos Zita

Substitutes:

Rev. Dr Trond Bakkevig (for Bishop B. Bue, deceased)
 Rev. David Gill (for Rev. W. Fejo)
 Rev. José Leite (for Pastor J. de S. Salvador)
 Mr Naboth Muchopa (for Ms R. Davies-Izard)
 Dr Bruce Robbins (for Mr A. Carvalho)

Unit Advisers:

Mr Bantu Mwauru Ndungu
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 Mrs Rosangela Jarjour - *Vice-Moderator*
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- * Bishop Leslie Boseto
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 - Bishop Serapion
 - Rev. Dr Paul Sherry
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- Rev. Dr M. Rakoto Endor (for Pasteur J.-B. Rakotomaro)
- Rev. Noel Fernando (for Rev. D. Fernando)
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**PROGRAMME AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE
FOR THE WORK OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES:
*A PROPOSAL***

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Mandate: At its meeting in September 1996, the Central Committee adopted a recommendation to "authorize the General Secretary, in consultation with the officers and the appropriate staff groups, and in the light of the CUV process, to give immediate attention to developing an overall alternative programme and management structure for the whole work of the Council; and authorize the Executive Committee to give policy direction to this effort so that a proposed alternative structure be brought to the next meeting of the Central Committee in September 1997". In response to that recommendation, the present document proposes such an alternative structure.

2. Continuity: On the basis of the directions emerging from the CUV process, the structure proposed here does not envisage any major changes in the functions and purposes of the WCC. The goal of the WCC, as expressed in the Basis, remains unchanged.

Drawing on the experience of the years since the last major restructuring of the WCC in 1992, this new proposed structure seeks to build on positive examples of working in an integrated fashion on activities mandated by the governing bodies and to encourage this style of work by removing the structural obstacles to it which became evident in the functioning of the four-unit structure, which was itself an effort to overcome the tendencies to fragmentation of work inherent in the earlier (1972) structure, with its many sub-units and departments. This proposal reflects an extensive consultative process within the WCC staff and with the Executive Committee (February 1997) and its sub-group on CUV (July 1997). Some issues and questions about introducing the model have been discussed by the staff; this discussion will be followed up if general approval is given to the directions of this model.

While continuing fully to acknowledge the importance of and need for specialized work of high quality, the model proposed here also seeks to recognize the need to sharpen the institutional identity of the WCC as a whole in order to revitalize support for it among its member churches and ecumenical partners.

3. Characteristics of the model: The structural model proposed here is intended to improve the quality of the work undertaken by the WCC as a fellowship of its member churches around the world and an instrument and servant of the global ecumenical movement. As such, this structure seeks to promote a kind of work in which:

a) greater emphasis is placed on visible and specifically defined activities having a clear focus and goals in accordance with priorities of the Council as a whole, rather than on the identity of the particular sector of the staff responsible for the activity (which may in fact be undertaken by ad hoc groups or temporary staff coalitions);

b) all activities of the WCC are undertaken in awareness of – and whenever possible in collaboration with – those involved in similar activities elsewhere. Special efforts will be made by the WCC to explore different mechanisms of partnership and cooperation with REOs, NCCs and other ecumenical partners to avoid duplication and enhance cohesion in the ecumenical movement;

c) all activities of the WCC are undertaken in a manner which incorporates and integrates contributions from all relevant parts of the staff, in order (1) to highlight the *uniqueness* of the WCC's engagement in these activities as a global fellowship of Christian churches and (2) to make the most *effective* possible use of human, financial and other resources available;

d) all activities of the WCC are undertaken on the mandate of and according to priorities determined by the governing bodies after consideration by the Programme Committee, thus (1) ensuring that the work of the WCC is responsive to the needs of both the churches and the ecumenical movement, and (2) requiring flexibility in response to new situations.

4. A single administrative whole: In order to promote the kind of work which meets these criteria, the WCC staff will be structured as a single administrative whole.

a) To facilitate and enhance day-to-day work involving persons with similar types of specialized assignments, the staff of this single administrative whole will be divided into a number of teams.

b) To facilitate supervision and coordination of the work as a whole, a

number of teams with similar or related profiles will be grouped into clusters.

c) The major focused activities described in § 3a above will be carried out by *ad hoc* teams or coalitions to which staff members from several different teams will be assigned.

d) Each cluster will have a full-time director with primary managerial responsibility for its teams. The cluster directors will supervise the work of the staff members in their cluster and ensure cooperation among the teams within the cluster. They will serve as members of the Staff Leadership Group (see § 20-21 below).

e) Each team will have (normally on a rotating basis) a team leader who, in addition to his or her other tasks, will be responsible for coordination, problem-solving and ensuring cooperation within and between teams.

f) While each staff member appointed by authority of the Central Committee will be assigned to one team and each staff member appointed by authority of the General Secretary to one team or one cluster, all staff members will be available for temporary assignment to *ad hoc* teams as described in § 4c above.

g) The General Secretary has overall responsibility for ensuring that all activities of the Council are in line with mandates and policies determined by the governing bodies; in this he or she will be assisted on a day-to-day basis by a small general secretariat team and on a continuing basis by a Staff Leadership Team.

h) The deputy general secretary will be responsible for directing a clear process of strategic coordination, planning, and evaluation of WCC activities, and for coordinating the work of the cluster directors in order to ensure interaction within the staff as a whole.

B. ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSED STRUCTURE

5. Clusters and teams: The proposed structure will consist of four clusters of staff teams in the areas of (1) issues and themes; (2) relationships and constituencies; (3) communication; (4) finance, services and administration.

6. General qualifications of staff: The commitment of the WCC to fully inclusive community is to be reflected insofar as possible in the constitution

of its staff. In addition to the training, experience and skills required by their specific assignment, all staff appointed by the Central Committee would demonstrate (1) a commitment and vocation to serve the Council; (2) willingness to work together in an integrated and ecumenical manner as outlined above; (3) knowledge of the structured life of the churches and the ecumenical movement and a commitment to deepen this knowledge and promote this movement; (4) ability to interpret their own work in the context of the whole work of the Council; and (5) readiness to assume special responsibilities in relations with member churches and, as necessary, additional responsibilities related to their own region and tradition. Staff should have the general endorsement of their churches to work in the WCC, although staff from non-member churches are welcome.

7. Nature and limitations of the description of this model. The following outline of the proposed structure describes each of the four clusters. In each case, an overall profile applicable to all the teams in the cluster is offered, followed by general indications of how the work of the teams in that cluster is integrally related to the work of the teams in the other clusters. The overall work of each team in the cluster is then described, focusing on the specific areas of specialization for which it is primarily responsible within the WCC.

These descriptions are to be understood within the context of the Council as a whole; they assume, but do not generally identify specific areas of collaboration with other teams. Nor do they explicitly repeat the purposes, functions and values for which the WCC exists or identify the major ecumenical partners with whom all its work is carried out. Furthermore, they avoid explicit reference to existing WCC programmes and activities. Continuation or discontinuation of these activities, inauguration of new activities and setting priorities among the various activities are matters for separate decision by the governing bodies. The structure is designed to facilitate work on the activities of the Council, not to specify what those activities should be.

Despite extensive discussions it seems to be difficult to achieve unanimous agreement about every proposal made below for allocating a particular concern to a specific team.

8. With the exception of the general secretary, deputy general secretary and the four cluster directors, this outline does not indicate staff positions to be filled. Staff positions must be authorized by the governing bodies according to a more detailed description of the activities to be undertaken than is intended by this outline (and within the financial means available). It is

expected that work on such a more detailed presentation would begin following approval of this basic model by the Central Committee, with the aim of presenting this to the February 1998 meeting of the Executive Committee, also as the basis for work on a 1999 budget.

9. *General Secretariat*

The General Secretariat team will consist of the general secretary, one deputy general secretary and other staff needed to provide necessary administrative assistance to the general secretary in (1) organizing WCC governing body meetings; (2) directing the activities of the Council according to the mandates and policies of the governing bodies, (3) representing the Council to its member churches, ecumenical and other partners and the public at large, and (4) strategic coordination of planning, monitoring and evaluation of activities of WCC. Primary responsibility for day-to-day oversight of interaction and integration in the work of the staff will be taken by the deputy general secretary, who will also depute for the general secretary in his or her absence from Geneva. The General Secretariat should provide a supportive atmosphere to nurture and enhance the work of the staff.

10. *Cluster of teams on issues and themes: overall profile*

a) The teams in this cluster would be made up of persons with skills, experience and training in one of the major areas of issues or themes identified by the Constitution as components of the underlying purpose of enabling churches to work together for unity in faith and life, witness and service. In consultation and coordination with the other teams in the cluster, each of these teams would have primary responsibility within the WCC for stimulating ecumenical activity – exchange and dialogue, monitoring, analysis and study, common witness and action by member churches, ecumenical partners and the wider Christian fellowship, including non-member churches, evangelicals, Pentecostals and African Independent Churches – in one such area.

b) In its activities, networking and building contacts with those parts of the ecumenical constituency which have particular concern for its issues, each team will collaborate closely with the teams in the *cluster on relations and constituencies*.

c) In facilitating communication among its partners and in evaluating, producing and disseminating information and interpretation regarding the issues on which it focuses, each team will collaborate closely with the teams in the *cluster on communication*.

d) In acquiring, using and sharing with its partners resources of any kind, especially material resources, each team will collaborate closely with the teams in the *cluster on finances, services and administration*.

11. *The following teams on issues and themes will be formed.*

11.1 Church, communion and renewal

This team will focus on the following areas of concern in the WCC:

- doctrinal and theological issues historically connected with the division and unity of the church;
- integration of social, cultural, political, racial and ethical issues into the ongoing theological discussion of the unity of the church;
- characteristics of ecumenical spirituality and the ecumenical significance of the varieties of Christian spirituality;
- principles and practice of and resources for ecumenical worship, biblical reflection and prayer;
- steps towards unity being taken by churches and groups of churches;
- renewal of the churches together in their worship, ecumenical theological reflection, spiritual formation and appreciation of the whole people of God.

The methodologies for its work would include conducting studies; publications; collection of resources and information; holding specialized consultations and world conferences on faith and order; training of worship and Bible study enablers.

In carrying out its activities it would work closely with theologians, theological schools and ecumenical institutes; monastic and other communities; liturgists and church musicians; ecumenical offices of member churches and other churches.

In order to work effectively the team will require staff members with theological training and demonstrated analytical ability; skills in liturgy and church music.

11.2 Mission and evangelism

This team will focus on the following areas of concern in the WCC:

- critical theological issues arising from the contemporary engagement of the churches, especially ecumenically, in mission and evangelism;

- the work of formal and informal mission structures, including those focused on community struggles for justice, within and outside of WCC member churches;
- ecumenical dimensions of the church's local and global mission of healing and wholeness.

The methodologies for its work would include conducting studies; publications; specialized consultations; equipping the churches for mission; training and awareness-building; sharing of resources; world conferences on mission and evangelism.

In carrying out its activities it would work closely with missiologists; mission boards and agencies; mission and evangelism staff or offices of churches and affiliated bodies; networks for urban-rural mission within member churches and ecumenical organizations and outside of them; staff of church-related and ecumenical health agencies; Christian health professionals and specialists in bio-medical ethics.

In order to work effectively the team will require staff members with mission and evangelism experience; training and demonstrated analytical ability in the history of mission and missiology; knowledge of the social and cultural dimensions of mission; experience and familiarity with public health, the healing ministry of the churches and issues of bio-medical ethics.

11.3 Justice, peace and creation

This team will focus on the following areas of concern in the WCC:

- empowerment and encouragement of solidarity with and among movements of people struggling for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, including movements and groups of women, youth, indigenous peoples, excluded and uprooted people, persons with disabilities, persons who suffer and are affected by racial and ethnic injustice;
- theological issues connected with the diakonia of the church;
- ecumenical, social, theological and ethical thought, particularly in the areas of economics and environment;
- the role of the churches together in confronting all dimensions of violence and building a culture of peace.

The methodologies for its work would include sharing of resources; conducting campaigns for advocacy and awareness-building; studies; publications; specialized consultations; ecumenical visits.

In carrying out its activities it would work closely with the appropriate offices of the churches, especially with representatives of social and people's movements; staff for women's and youth concerns and women's and youth groups in member churches and ecumenical bodies; social justice and environment offices in member churches and ecumenical bodies; academic specialists and organizations for Christian ethics, economics, environmental sciences; researchers and institutes for peace and nonviolence.

In order to work effectively the team will require staff members with ecumenical experience and experience in and commitment to social action and advocacy work; persons with training and demonstrated analytical ability in social ethics, theology, sociology, anthropology, economics and environmental issues.

11.4 Education and ecumenical formation

This team will focus on the following areas of concern in the WCC:

- the nature and practice of ecumenical learning;
- the churches' educational ministry in congregation and community;
- ecumenical theological education and ministerial formation;
- ecumenical human resource development, including scholarships;
- the role of the laity in the church and the ecumenical movement.

The methodologies for its work would include: study and analysis of the churches' educational methodologies, materials and practices; formulation of advice on development of curricula, educational materials and training; offering educational resources relevant to other WCC activities, including collaboration in the programmes of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey; channelling of financial support to individuals and educational institutions, particularly for development of human and informational resources; network building among laity organizations; publications, including study guides on selected ecumenical issues.

In carrying out its activities it would work closely with education staff in member churches and ecumenical bodies; academic specialists in pedagogy; theological schools and associations of theological schools; lay academies and laity organizations.

In order to work effectively the team will require staff members with experience in general, Christian and theological education in both teaching and administrative positions; pedagogical training and demonstrated analytical

ability; familiarity with lay academics and their network.

12. *Cluster of teams on relations and constituencies: overall profile*

- a) The teams in this cluster would be made up of persons with relational skills and with experience of and familiarity with the activities, priorities, needs and concerns of the member churches of the WCC and of one of the major types of partner or constituency with whom the WCC works in fulfilling its functions. Each team would have primary responsibility within the WCC to maintain lines of communication, deepen relationships and extend areas of collaborative action and witness between the WCC and the partners specified and to link these relationships with the life and work of the member churches. The cluster as a whole will facilitate and coordinate efforts to contact evangelicals, Pentecostals, African Independent Churches and others outside the WCC fellowship to interpret the WCC, build relationships and enhance participation in the one ecumenical movement.
- b) Since the teams in this cluster maintain these relationships on behalf of the WCC, an important element of these relationships will be information, dialogue and exchange regarding the ongoing activities of the Council in pursuit of its priority concerns. This requires regular collaboration with the teams in the *cluster on issues and themes*.
- c) To facilitate continuing and deepened contacts with member churches and other partners, these teams may require or suggest specific materials for information and interpretation of the WCC, and will thus be involved in regular collaboration with the teams in the *cluster on communication*.
- d) Each team will collaborate closely with the teams in the *cluster on finances, services and administration* in providing resources for WCC partners as appropriate, in securing resources from other partners and in using material, human and informational resources in its own work.

13. *The following teams on relations and constituencies will be formed:*

13.1 Ecumenical relations

This team will focus on relations among WCC member churches and on the relations of the WCC with:

- member churches and families of churches in the Council;
- organizations of Christian World Communions;

- the Roman Catholic Church;
- evangelical, Pentecostal and African Independent churches;
- international ecumenical organizations.

The methodologies for its work would include organizing visits to and from representatives of member churches, especially those facing crisis situations; monitoring events and collecting, analyzing and interpreting information about developments within the churches and organizations listed above; developing relationships with churches outside WCC membership and co-ordinating applications for membership; coordinating WCC participation in the Joint Working Group with the Roman Catholic Church; maintaining a WCC office in the United States; specialized consultations.

In carrying out its activities it would work closely with staff responsible for ecumenical relations in WCC member churches and representatives of other churches and organizations listed above.

In order to work effectively the team will require staff members with international ecumenical experience; knowledge of the ecumenical movement and the history and ethos of the WCC; specialized knowledge of particular Christian traditions and church families; skills in interpersonal relationships.

13.2 Regional relations

This team will focus on

- relating to and working with churches, ecumenical organizations and other ecumenical partners in each region of the world, including the development of expertise, information and analysis of the region;
- facilitating ecumenical resources-sharing and exploration of cooperative styles of work with ecumenical partners in each region of the world.

The methodologies for its work would include monitoring events and developments affecting the region as a whole and the churches and ecumenical partners there; collecting, analyzing and interpreting information about the region and its churches; facilitating the process of coordination of and participation in regional groups, round tables and other mechanisms for ecumenical resource-sharing; ensuring that regular lines of exchange are maintained among partners within and outside the region; mediation and advocacy regarding key concerns in the region; visits to the region.

In carrying out its activities **within each region**, the team would, in

cooperation with specialized instruments, such as ACT and ECLOF, work closely with WCC member churches, the regional ecumenical organization and national councils of churches, as well as other churches, ecumenical bodies and partners as appropriate; in carrying out its activities **outside the region**, it would work closely with church and ecumenical agencies and other bodies which provide resources for WCC partners in the region.

In order to work effectively the team will require staff members who are native to each region and familiar with its cultures; who have experience and demonstrated abilities in cross-cultural ecumenical work; expertise in theology, sociology, economics, international relations and development assistance; skills in project financing, analysis and administration.

13.3 Interreligious relations and dialogue

This team will focus on:

- relations between Christians and neighbours of other faiths at global and local levels;
- specific concerns arising from the role and function of religion and religions in contemporary society;
- new religious movements;
- indigenous beliefs and traditional spirituality;
- theological issues pertaining to religious plurality.

The methodologies for its work would include organizing bilateral and multi-lateral interfaith dialogue meetings and specialized consultations; monitoring, collecting information about and interpreting events and trends related to the role of religion in society; studies and publications; visits; formulating advice to churches and ecumenical organizations.

In carrying out its activities it would work closely with representatives and organizations of other faiths; staff responsible for interreligious relations in churches and ecumenical organizations; interreligious organizations; academic specialists in individual religions and in the history, sociology and theology of religion.

In order to work effectively the team will require staff members with experience in interfaith encounter; familiarity with world religions other than Christianity; theological training and demonstrated analytical ability; capacity to interpret other religions and interreligious relations to concerned non-experts.

13.4 International relations

This team will focus on international concerns and public issues related to human rights, armed conflict and conflict resolution, arms trading and disarmament, relations between and within states, and the situation of refugees, migrants and other uprooted people – in particular as these affect the life and witness of the churches – and will have primary responsibility for coordinating relations between the WCC and the United Nations and its related agencies.

The methodologies for its work would include monitoring events, developments and trends in key areas of international concern, and collecting, analyzing and interpreting information regarding these; maintaining consultative relations with the UN and related agencies and non-governmental organizations; contact and advocacy with government representatives; channelling of resources to meet the needs of refugees and other uprooted people in close cooperation with the team on regional relations; preparing background materials and drafting statements and other texts on key public issues for public dissemination according to the Constitution and Rules of the WCC.

In carrying out its activities it would work closely with staff responsible for international affairs, human rights and uprooted people in member churches and ecumenical organizations; staff of the UN, its related agencies, permanent missions to the UN in New York and Geneva and regional inter-governmental bodies; experts and specialized institutes on international affairs.

In order to work effectively the team will require staff members with knowledge of and experience with governments and international organizations; training and demonstrated abilities in political and social analysis; concrete knowledge of and experience in work for human rights, uprooted people, peace and justice; theological awareness; diplomatic and relational skills.

14. *Cluster of communication teams: overall profile*

- a) The teams in this cluster would be made up of persons with professional skills and experience in a particular element of or medium for sharing information, interpretation and communication. Each team would work in relationship with external media and with multipliers in member churches and ecumenical partners; it would also be involved in the

production of communication materials. Within the organization as a whole, this cluster would have the primary responsibility for public information about the life and activities of the WCC.

b) Each team in this cluster would work regularly and closely with the teams in the *cluster on issues and themes* in order to ensure that in the planning and budgeting of all activities undertaken by the WCC attention is paid to the communication element.

c) Since the WCC is a fellowship of churches and an instrument of the ecumenical movement, communicating the WCC necessarily involves providing information and interpretation not only about the work of the Council as an institution, but also about the life and witness of the member churches and the ecumenical movement as a whole. Consequently, the teams in this cluster will collaborate closely with the teams in the *cluster on relations and constituencies*.

d) Each team will collaborate closely with the teams in the *cluster on finances, services and administration*, particularly in the areas of electronic information management, income development and sale of communication products.

15. *The following communication teams will be formed:*

15.1 Public information team

The tasks of this team will include:

- providing public information and communication services to encourage and assist secular, ecumenical and church-related media outlets in covering the WCC;
- coordinating, presenting and producing materials to inform and interpret the WCC to visitors to the Ecumenical Centre, member churches, ecumenical partners, non-governmental organizations, agencies, etc.;
- facilitating the availability of information about the WCC and its activities on the Internet;
- offering advice and support regarding communication elements of all WCC activities.

In order to work effectively the team will require staff members with experience of and skills in working with international media; ability to explain and interpret the whole range of ecumenical work in terms accessible

to a non-specialist audience; general familiarity with the use and possibilities of all elements of media communication and public relations.

15.2 WCC Publications

The tasks of this team will include:

- coordinating the selection of and editorial and production work for all books published by the WCC;
- editorial and production work for a periodical ecumenical academic journal;
- coordination of the distribution, promotion and sale of all WCC print products;
- sale of WCC and other ecumenical publications and related items;
- coordination of graphic and production work for all printed materials from the WCC.

In order to work effectively the team will require staff members with specialized knowledge of all facets of book and periodical publication, including skills and experience in editorial work, marketing and distribution; experience in retail sales; experience and skills in all aspects of print production, including costing, typesetting, proofreading and manufacturing.

15.3 Communication services

The tasks of this team will include:

- coordination, according to an agreed WCC language policy, of all translations of WCC texts;
- coordination of interpretation for all WCC meetings and consultations;
- development of audio-visual materials to communicate the WCC through liaison with audio-visual production units among ecumenical partners;
- maintenance of the photo archive and sale of still photographs;
- maintenance of the WCC and ecumenical print and sound archives;
- operation of the specialized ecumenical library.

In order to work effectively the team will require staff members with experience of organizing translation and interpretation in multilingual settings; familiarity with the specialized terminology of the churches and ecumenical movement; ability to translate documents into other languages as specified by the WCC language policy; experience in audio-visual, television and video production; training in library science and archiving.

16. *Cluster of teams on finance, service and administration: overall profile*

a) The teams in this cluster would be made up of persons with professional skills and experience in the management of a particular type of resource whose administration is essential for the activities of the WCC. Each team would have primary responsibility within the WCC for the provision and administration of its particular area of infrastructural support.

b) Since this cluster comprises key functional areas that serve the entire staff by providing effective and efficient support, it would work co-operatively on a continuing basis with all other teams and clusters; and all other teams and clusters would collaborate with these teams in the areas specified.

17. *The following finance, service and administration teams will be formed:*

17.1 Finance

The tasks of this team will include:

- preparing a consolidated budget for the WCC on the basis of reliable projections of income and expenses;
- advising and supporting specific cost centres regarding all aspects of financial operations;
- ensuring availability of accurate and timely financial reporting and accounting for internal and external use;
- administering investments on behalf of the WCC;
- supervising and processing all payments and all receipts;
- monitoring and interpreting expenses and financial results;
- providing projections for future financial planning and assisting in a strategy for long-term financial stability.

17.2 Income Development

The tasks of this team will include:

- ensuring and monitoring income flow;
- interpreting the income needs of the WCC;
- coordinating all efforts to develop income from existing donors to the WCC and its activities;
- seeking new and additional sources of income for the WCC.

17.3 Central Administration

The tasks of this team will include:

- managing and ensuring maintenance of all buildings, grounds and property on behalf of WCC staff and other tenants;
- managing existing service contracts;
- supervising all major equipment purchases and rental;
- ensuring necessary infrastructural services in such areas as reception, mail and shipping, telephone and telefax, photocopying and conference arrangements.

17.4 Personnel - Human Resources

The tasks of this team will include:

- administering all recruitment of staff according to an agreed WCC recruitment policy;
- providing and administering personnel services for WCC staff (and other tenants on a contractual basis), including employment contracts, payment of salaries and provision of staff benefits, staff and family orientation, staff training, enrichment and development, employment permits, health and other personal insurance for staff, retirement and pension arrangements;
- developing long-term WCC personnel policies and human resources development plans.

17.5 Computer Information Services

The tasks of this team will be to manage information technology systems in order to meet the goals of the WCC. This would include:

- maintaining all computer hardware, peripherals and software used by the WCC (and other tenants on a contractual basis);
- maintaining all electronic networking, such as LAN, Internet access, other data telecommunications and modems, and banking DTA;
- administering an agreed WCC information management policy.

C. OPERATION OF THE STRUCTURE

18. The work of each team will consist of (1) participating in carrying out specific major tasks or projects, normally undertaken for a definite period of

time, with definite objectives, and drawing on the work of several teams (examples of such integrated projects in the recent period have included the Ecumenical Decade, the ecclesiology and ethics study, the consultative process on HIV/AIDS); (2) fulfilling ongoing tasks, especially those linked to monitoring developments in its area of concern and to regularly scheduled events; (3) contributing to preparations for Council-wide events, including world conferences, Assemblies and meetings of governing bodies. It should be noted that the intention to “give priority to reflection and deliberation on the key issues facing the church in the world” (Doc. 6.2, para 3.15.2) in the meetings of governing bodies will imply a greater investment of time than is presently the case on the third of these areas of work. In addition, staff members of each team will be assigned to ad hoc task forces and working groups and will be expected to be available to contribute as possible to the work of other teams when their special competence is needed.

19. A collegial approach to decision-making, in which consultation, participation, openness and transparency are valued, will be maintained within teams, clusters and the staff as a whole. While the overall directions and priorities of the work of the entire staff are set by the governing bodies, to whom the general secretary is directly accountable, the many day-to-day decisions which arise within the staff in carrying out these mandates should be made in a consultative manner. Each team leader is responsible for keeping the cluster director fully informed of questions and problems arising in coordinating the work of his or her team; and cluster directors are expected to raise concerns arising within their cluster in the Staff Leadership Group. Within the clusters and teams there must be clarity on accountability and regular procedures for evaluation of activities.

20. The Staff Leadership Group is the chief internal management team. Its overall responsibility is to advise the general secretary in his or her role as chief executive officer of the Council. It will be chaired by the general secretary and its members will include the deputy general secretary and the directors of the four clusters (with substitutes when they are absent). Other staff may be co-opted or invited for special expertise, balance or familiarity with a specific item on its agenda. The Staff Leadership Group will normally meet once a week; and the cluster directors will be responsible to keep staff in their clusters regularly informed of key discussions and decisions made by the group.

21. As necessary the Staff Leadership Group may appoint ad hoc or permanent functional groups to advise it in specific areas of management.

22. A Staff Consultative Group, moderated by the deputy general secretary and open to all staff members, will meet regularly – normally once a month. These meetings will not only provide an occasion for the Staff Leadership Group to report on its work to the full staff, but will also serve as a staff forum in which important priorities and projects can be reviewed, new ideas and concerns can be raised and discussed, and staff is given an opportunity to provide feedback to the general secretariat regarding the ongoing work of the Council.

23. Job descriptions for all staff members will both specify the expectations within the particular team to which the staff member is assigned and indicate the overall requirement to undertake collaborative work along the lines set out above. Consequently, regular performance evaluations will be undertaken in a manner that assesses both these dimensions of the staff member's work.

24. In order to put into effect the changes proposed here to the internal structure and management of the WCC, amendments will be required to the Rules of the World Council of Churches (Rules V,5a3,5d; VII; VIIIc; IX, 3A,4-5; X,3-4), as well as to bylaws and other documents adopted by the Central Committee (according to the provisions of the WCC Constitution, Article V,4) for the functioning of the WCC and the conduct of its business. Such changes should be approved in principle by the Central Committee, with the final wording to be adopted by the Executive Committee prior to the Eighth Assembly.

LAOS CONSULTATION
Le Cénacle, Geneva, 7-10 May 1997

Theme:

***Towards a Common Understanding of the Theological Concepts
of Laity/Laos: the People of God"***

***Proceedings from the Working Group on
Lay Participation Towards Inclusive Community***

INTRODUCTION

From 7-10 May 1997, twenty-seven men and women in cooperation with the World Council of Churches met in Geneva to consider together the possibility of a common understanding of the theological concepts of laity/laos/the people of God. We talked about the present situation and future challenges to the Christian churches. The meeting was chaired by Fr Nicholas Apostola (Romanian Orthodox Church) and Dr Anne Tveter (Lutheran). It was organized by Ms Evelyn Appiah, Executive Secretary of the Stream of Lay Participation towards Inclusive Community.

The group came from a variety of ecclesial traditions, which demanded thinking *together*, speaking *together*, doing *together*, to make sense of the same imagery from different perspectives. At the same time, we shared a commitment to the Bible, the common heritage of the churches. Many of us and our churches are living our Christian commitment in contexts of pluralism - cultural, religious, political, social.

In the course of our time together, we discovered that almost *any* term, *any* image has strengths and weaknesses. These can not stand alone, but need the perspective of the whole church in the whole world. We also experienced the ways in which all of us are bound by the limitations of our particularities of church and culture. We need each other to conceptualize these particularities.

As a preliminary observation we would remind ourselves that the "laity" constitutes ninety-eight percent of the church in its life of worship and service. The laity are the "agents" of Christ in the world, daily missionaries. The laos is the common element between the life of the congregation and the

life of the world. The laity *are* the church in the world. One could say that within the life and workings of the WCC the laity similarly forms the basis of each and every programme. One could say that the former Laity Department has now been localized in the work of each of the Units and Streams.

The following are some recommendations which surfaced during the presentation of papers and group work which we share with Christians and Christian churches associated with the World Council of Churches for prayerful consideration and action.

OPENING PRAYER

Because we were involved in this process prayerfully, we share a prayer which informed the drafting of this text:

Grant, O God of truth, that what is written for the reading of many may fully and accurately reproduce the views of those who engage in the quest for the visible unity of your church, having them say what they actually do say and in the way that they mean it, so that even those divided in faith may come to see that they are divided within the same faith, because they believe in the self-same Lord; for that Lord's sake we ask it. Amen.

(Source: Martin Cressey, *Encounters for Unity*, p.45).

SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS ABOUT IMAGES AND MODELS

The mystery of the Church is so profound that the earliest communities who followed Jesus found it helpful to describe it through images. Biblical scholars say that ninety six different images of the church appear in the New Testament, one of which is "the people of God," a designation inherited from the people of Israel.

Such symbolism is a way of describing the community, of holding it together, and of fostering loyalty and commitment. These images also suggest attitudes about the church and courses of action in the world.

Soon we will reach the close of the second millenium in the life of the Church, and the New Testament images continue to be employed to deepen the understanding of new generations in the church. As a model, "people of God" points to a network of inter-personal relationships - to a living, breathing community.

THE SITUATION

WHAT IS THE SAME? WHAT HAS CHANGED?

Congregational living. Congregational/parish life has many variables - different histories, confessional commitments, understandings of ministry - but one aspect is a constant: most members of our churches are laity. This is evident when we worship. In church people search for meaning and try to make sense of the Scriptural affirmation: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8)

Fifty years ago, most people who sought theological education at seminaries became ordained, or worked professionally in the churches. Most of these were men. Today, many people who seek such education are not or will not be ordained. Some, even many, of these students are women. And many will not necessarily work professionally in the church.

Ecumenical implications. When we gather in ecumenical meetings, however, the preponderance of laity no longer is evident. Clergy often are representatives in ecumenical gatherings, regardless of the ecclesiological self-understandings of particular churches. In fact, in these contexts, we sometimes talk about laity as objects to be trained, rather than people in partnership.

When we used to gather "experts" at Bossey to discuss key issues confronting the churches and the world, many of these people were laity. We have moved away from thinking and behaving in these terms.

We recognize that, in the history of the Church there has been much clericalisation. This has been reinforced by the institutional model of church. It often has led to the devaluing of unordained members. In this situation, the churches working together through the World Council of Churches have been concerned about taking seriously the knowledge and experience of unordained as well as ordained members of the body of Christ. The work on "Church as koinonia," on the viability of theological education, on theology by the people/ecumenical spirituality - all have been attempts in diverse ways to restore the unordained to their rightful place in the mystery of the Church.

In earlier days this work was structured through the Ecumenical Institute at Château de Bossey and the Department on the Laity; then the sub-unit on Renewal and Congregational Life; and now by Lay Participation towards Inclusive Community Stream.

Interfaith issues. Christianity is born out of the People of Israel, and Islam counts herself as one of the three religions of the Book. Hence, these dialogues have their special problems and possibilities. While using similar language, all three give this language distinct and different meanings. In other words, we might ask, in what ways is Christianity which uses the image People of God different from Judaism and Islam which also claim to be God's people?

The yearning for meaning. Whereas earlier generations of Christians understood that there is a necessary connection between church and believer, this no longer is so in some parts of the world. Many Christians think they do not need the church as an institution or as a community. They resist meetings. They do not participate in worship. They are not involved in events sponsored by the church. They are in a desperate search for meaning and community, but are less likely to seek it through steady, stable participation in a Christian congregation.

Some parts of the contemporary church and world have been influenced strongly by the culture of the Enlightenment and of Christendom. The former, with its devotion to progress and its mantras of "fact", "theory" and "objectivity", has led us to disengage understanding from being and behaving. Rationality reigns supreme.

In some cultures, we see signs of dissatisfaction with this over-emphasis. The affirmation of "Jesus Christ yesterday, today and forever" now is made in the context of a widespread yearning of the experience of the numinous and a desire to obey the will of God. How people choose to express this dis-ease can have positive or destructive results.

Changes in ways of understanding the church. In some places, Christians lived with a Christendom ideology which was an ideology of power. This fostered a model of the church as a kind of Solomonic temple set over against the world. Today there is growing dissatisfaction with that model. It has been supplanted with an understanding of church as servant. In the third world, which has become the heartland of world Christianity, churches now face the question of how to live out this new model.

Changes in ways of understanding the world. The world, as the "arena" in which the laos works and lives, has also undergone a change of meaning. Is the world the "secular city" or is it the oikoumene? Is it the "darkness" which did not comprehend the Light and has tried to extinguish it (cf. Jn 1:5), or is it the light of reason and human knowledge? The question of

radical secularization - which is occurring in different ways and at different speeds in different parts of the world - has changed the terms of the discussion in many places. Not everyone believes that the world is in need of salvation.

HOW DO WE DEFINE LAITY/LAOS/PEOPLE OF GOD?

The question of terminology with regard to the "laity" has begun to take on ecclesiological significance. We have come to use words like lay, laos, people of God, and whole people of God almost interchangeably. At the same time, people from different confessional backgrounds use the same terms with quite different meanings.

In some ways, this terminological dilemma is a particularly modern phenomenon. It represents both an uncertainty about the nature and role of the churches in the world today, and a desire to affirm that everyone - indeed, the whole creation is a focus of God's love.

In the course of church history the laity usually were seen as Christians who are not clergy. Such a distinction can be helpful because those who are set apart for a special ministry within the church and members of religious orders do have a differently oriented vocation than Christians living more fully in the world. However, this negative description does not do justice to the specific vocation of the laity.

Clergy, members of religious orders, and lay people (who assume a variety of responsibilities) have received the ordination of baptism for a Christian life. All form part of the church. Nevertheless, the positions held within church membership and the differently oriented vocations strongly influence for each the special interests, the priorities, conceptions of the church and the understanding of the world. If such different priorities and points of view are not recognized, talk about the laity soon loses its focus and gets confused.

The twentieth century ecumenical discussion on the laity has rightly focused on laity who spend most of their time in "worldly" environments. Nevertheless there always was a tendency to concentrate very soon on clergy-laity relationships, on church structures and church educational activities rather than on what it means to be Christians in the world. This is mainly due to the fact that many clergy and professional church workers became the spokespersons in the ecumenical laity discussions. Therefore the real challenge of the rediscovery of the laity has until now seldom been faced.

The vocation and the experience of lay people in worldly environments are marked by the fact that they almost always live in penultimate realities, although as Christians they attempt to live according to what Christian faith teaches about the ultimate reality.

In the east the Church has traditionally presented an open attitude towards the world, even though there may have been times and situations when the world and its distractions were viewed skeptically there. In the west the Church's attitude toward the world and secular knowledge has been more mixed. Nonetheless, as Christians we believe that God, in creating human beings in

God's image, created us to know and be in communion with God. God has created every human being good, to do good. God created every human being with a desire to know and worship God.

We find this deep longing to know God and to do good in every civilization, in every people, in every person. We see evidence of this everywhere. It is not the exclusive province of Christians or the Christian church. It is a natural phenomenon, present everywhere by the design of God.

In addition to this, however, the church also has had a clear sense of itself as a people set apart. There are many words and images used in the New Testament and the writings of early Christians to describe this special relationship with God that Christians felt in the person of Jesus Christ.

This tension between being "in the world but not of the world" (cf. John 17:15) has given the Christian tradition a variety of ways of understanding the church, of understanding the role of Christians in the world, and of how Christians should interact with people who may not share the Christian belief of God's self-revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. Sometimes, the Christian community's understanding of itself as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (I Pt 2:9) can be used triumphalistically.

We are keenly aware, however, that "God desires that everyone be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth" (I Tim 2:4). God's revelation and truth and light is for all people. God is at work in creation. All persons are objects of God's love.

Yet Jesus Christ did come. As Christians we affirm that there was a uniqueness to his person, his presence, and his message.

His coming was and is the fulfillment of God's promise not only to Israel, but to the whole of humanity, to the whole of creation, regardless of time, regardless of location.

So terms such as laity, laos, people of God have a very special meaning for those who follow Jesus Christ. To highlight the sacred role the Christian community has in the transformation, sanctification and salvation of the world is not to delimit the work of the Holy Spirit.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE MATTERS FOR THE CHURCHES?

1) Often there has been a failure to be aware fully of the presence of Christ in a person's vocation, dignity, responsibility, and destiny. The churches are not sufficiently aware of the rich human resources in their midsts. Through Decade Team Visits consciousness has been heightened of the ways in which women are pillars of the churches. Insufficient efforts are made to discover, celebrate, and invite new people to offer their gifts in the church and the world. Creative, systemic ways are needed to do this within our churches, and to share our discoveries wherever they are needed. We pose these questions to ourselves and our churches: How can the laity be empowered and given entitlement? What structures will do this most effectively?

2) The superficial attribution of matters "sacred" to the clergy and "secular" to the laity must be transcended. The whole Church has a "secular dimension." We live in the world even though our Christian faith cautions us not to become captives of it. Those Christians whose vocations involve them in this world struggle to do so responsibly - sometimes in the face of complex ethical dilemmas and compromising challenges.

3) The spiritual formation of the people of God is based primarily upon a covenantal relationship: "Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people" (Jer 7:23). Our relationship of trust with God shapes our thinking, doing, feeling, and being. Thus, formation of the laos is both a spiritual and physical process. How people are introduced to and instructed in the faith in the various stages of development through their lives will affect their relations with God, with others, with creation and with themselves.

Growing toward maturity as people of God would require taking seriously one's baptism, one's worship and prayer life, and one's sensitivity to the

needs of others. As a pilgrim people we are formed by our experiences of suffering and joy, by our daily living in the world, and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In this regard it is important to highlight the family as the primary location of Christian formation. For most people their first instruction in the faith is met in the family. The experience of God that we encounter in our families often marks us for the rest of our lives. The family, however it might be configured, is both the fundamental organizational unit of the church and of society. The churches must take care to strengthen and support the family spiritually as well as materially. When one speaks of the formation of the laity, therefore, the family is the first and often the most powerful location where this formation takes place.

4) Renewed reflection about the full implications of the "people of God" may lead to a more inclusive understanding of the church. Movements of people who have been disenfranchised continue to expand our horizons, adjust our definitions, and change our behaviours.

5) All too often, the manner in which our ecumenical work has been conducted has become bureaucratized, professionalized, and specialized. Although expertise has its proper place in the working out of issues among our divided churches - because we seek unity *of* the whole people *in* the whole church *for* the whole world - the churches need to recommit themselves to taking this 'professionalization' of ecumenism seriously in the healing of our divisions.

At the same time, it must be noted that, all too often, ecumenical formation has been neglected in our churches - thus widening the gap between those who are interested in becoming involved and comfortable in ecumenical arenas, and those who are not. If reconciliation is essential, then every follower of Christ must be involved, and provided with the tools to reflect on the unity we seek. New models are needed to achieve this aim. More persons need to become involved in areas of practical ecumenism, i.e. churches and Christians doing things together, thinking together, because they are conscious of belonging to one body of Christ by Baptism.

6) Sound Biblical teaching is necessary for all Christians, because it is the source of our faith, a corrective to brokenness, and a connection with the struggles Christians face in the world. Many churches voice concern that not all that could or should be done in this area of Christian nurture - among our youth, in our families, in our churches, is being done. This makes it harder

for Christians to live in congruence between their believing and their behaving. Because many of us experience this challenge, we may be able to respond most fruitfully if we respond together.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCHES TOGETHER?

1) During the opening worship of the Consultation, the participants prayed for each other with these words: "Gracious God, make (name) into a living stone, chosen and precious in your sight." Subsequent discussions deepened the meaning of these words. However it also became apparent that, regardless of variations in theoretical understanding of the nature of the church and its ministries in the churches represented in the persons of the participants, the practical functioning within these various traditions seemed to be the same: the devaluing of the vocation of the laity in the church and the world. It would appear that all of the churches are similarly challenged.

Because the churches bring this behaviour into the ecumenical movement, it also is a challenge for our churches together. The restoration of unity among our churches is fundamentally the restoration of relationships in the fullest sense. Thus, in addition to dialogue about differences in theory, the churches also need to affirm and/or admonish one another for the gap between theory and practice, to pray for a change of mind and heart, and to explore concrete ways in which to become more consistent.

2) Mixed/ecumenical/interchurch marriages are a common phenomenon among laity and some married clergy. This is a relatively new development. The consequences have not been digested fully by our churches. In fact, some religious leaders are disturbed by this fact. Thus, what potentially is an avenue of increased growth and understanding among Christians borne of human love, sometimes becomes a problem for couples because of the remaining divisions between churches.

Is it possible for churches to maximize the ecumenical potential of this phenomenon, and minimize the pain experienced by families in mixed marriages? What progress have the churches made at official levels that is not yet fully received by congregations/parishes? What changes might be made to lessen problems? Can the churches mine the ecumenical potential of these relationships in new and creative ways?

3) When the history of the twentieth century ecumenical movement was

reviewed, we were reminded of the vision, strength, insight, and dedication of laity from all our churches. They have been leaven in our churches, salt which gave flavour to the fledgling quest for Christian unity, lights of reconciliation to the world, prophets who sought peace and pursued it, harbingers of an inclusivity ahead of their time. They were and are "Christophoroi" - Christ-bearers. We confess how easy it is to forget these witnesses, saints and martyrs. They still have much to teach us. The churches must rededicate themselves to finding ways to remember and appropriate this ecumenical tradition; to teach it to future generations; to honour their gifts to the church catholic; and to continue their witness.

Moreover, lay persons are a major source of pressure towards the *unity* of the church. In their relations across denominational lines, the pain sometimes experienced by those in "mixed marriages," their participation in common parishes, and their refusal to accept the continuing divisions of the churches, the laos challenge the churches to overcome their divisions.

4) The meaning of ordination and oversight, and the relationship between the ordained and the laity, continues to be one of the most vexing areas of disagreement among our churches. Though the way through these church-dividing issues is still unclear, they are sufficiently crucial to achieving Christian unity and renewal that the churches cannot stop talking about them and working at them until unity is achieved. These discussions must occur within the context of our understanding of the role of the laity in the life of our churches. For this reason, it is crucial that we not be satisfied with texts that convey an *apparent* agreement, but rather be mindful of the underlying tensions that persist whenever we begin our dialogues. Furthermore, the laity must be involved in the dialogues. The laity are the people whose primary experience is in congregational life.

Another aspect of clergy-laity relations is the use and abuse of power and authority within the church. All are called to be Christ's agents of transformation in the world, serving in different ways and means according to one's gifts and heartfelt enthusiasm. These differences do not infer a superiority of one means of service over another. All need to be critically aware of how one's gifts are being utilized in service and whether it inhibits the full potential of others. Examples should be gathered and lifted up of ways in which power and authority may be used that demonstrate the full expression of people's gifts for ministry.

5) The faithful are incorporated into Christ by their baptism. Baptism and confirmation is the ordination of the laity which authorizes them to participate

in Christ's ministry in and for the world. "Baptism is the sign of new life through Jesus Christ. It unites the one baptized with Christ and with his people." [BEM on Baptism: II,2] In addition, "baptism, as a baptism into Christ's death, has ethical implications which not only call for personal sanctification, but also motivate Christians to strive for the realization of the will of God in all realms of life." [BEM on Baptism: III,10] The churches have achieved a growing convergence about the real, though imperfect communion we share through our baptism. This agreement should become part of our confessional and ecumenical teaching about the church and we should talk about how to realize this theological agreement in our churches. We will look for ways to recognize and celebrate this ecumenical growth through appropriate liturgical acts and forms.

Further study needs to be made of the issue of baptism in relation to the laos, that is to say the whole Body of Christ. For example, common reference is made to baptism as a *universal* ordination "to" the "people of God." This is helpful, but what does it imply about the "second" ordination of the clergy to their particular functions? Is it possible to use this language without implying that the "second" ordination is more "complete," or a "perfection" of the first? Can we speak of baptism of all Christians as a "general" ordination without implying that clerical ordination is a *second* ordination?

6) Any consideration of the church as the people of God actualizes the relations between the church and other communities of faith. No common Christian theology of religions has as yet emerged out of the increasing awareness that Christians - also in the places where they once dominated the culture - live in a world of religious pluralism. Yet, since the WCC established interfaith dialogue programmes in 1971 (Addis Ababa), programmes that were confirmed in Nairobi in 1975, a substantial body of experience and guidelines for interreligious dialogues has become an official part of the WCC work. During the consultation, the urgency of incorporating the insights and concerns, that have been recognized in and through the dialogue experiences of the WCC, was recognized and the sentiment was voiced that this urgency not be dampened by the lack of agreement in the matters of theologies of religions.

7) Ecumenism deals with healing relationships - between Christians, among churches, for the sake of the world. Christian spirituality deals with a relationship - to the Triune God we know through Jesus Christ - and through God, to each other. Both ecumenism and spirituality recognize that all too often our relationships with each other, indeed with the whole created order and thus with God, are broken and in need of mending. A loving God

beckons us to the Godhead and also to our neighbours.

We see among many Christians from all churches a desire for a deeper and richer experience of God, for holiness, for transcendence. This yearning is transcending the remaining divisions among our churches. It evidences itself in ecumenical prayer groups, Bible study groups, retreats, reading of each others devotional literature, ecumenical pilgrimages, hymn festivals, special worship services such as during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, in special youth gatherings, etc. It also must be the fertile soil in which this quest for unity occurs. We all pray "*Our* Father" even if we are alone. There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart.

At the same time, we acknowledge that, all too often, our churches have not adequately responded to this yearning - and have not responded together. We recognize great potential for growth, and for growth together, by responding to this yearning together. In 1950, the World Council of Churches' Central Committee committed themselves in the Toronto Statement to "enter into spiritual relationships through which they seek to learn from each other and to give help to each other in order that the body of Christ may be built up and that the life of the churches may be renewed." We will seek new ways to do this, and/or reclaim traditional ways for new generations of the faithful. Because the church is a worshipping and praying community, we especially will look for ways in which we can show the unity we already have in acts of worship.

8) Christians are called to bear one another's burdens. People around the world - some with whom we share a common bond in the Christian community, others with whom we share the common bond of our humanity - suffer from disasters, strife, war, famine, oppression, and economic deprivation. When we worship, we bring the world before God, offering prayers of intercession for all those who suffer. We recall another commitment the churches made in the Toronto Statement, that churches "should recognize their solidarity with each other, render assistance to each other in case of need and refrain from such actions as are incompatible with brotherly (and sisterly) relationships." We celebrate the many ways that Christians and churches around the world have fulfilled this responsibility in our life together through the World Council of Churches. We repent of those times when we have missed the mark. We recognize and celebrate those people - many lay people in all our churches - who have exercised persistent leadership in responding to these human needs.

INTERIM STATEMENT ON THE THEOLOGICAL AND EMPIRICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUE OF DISABILITIES

INTRODUCTION

"A church which seeks to be truly united within itself and to move towards unity with others must be open to all; yet abled-bodied church members, both by their attitudes and by emphasis on activism, marginalize and often exclude those with mental or physical disabilities. The church cannot exemplify "the full humanity revealed in Christ", bear witness to the inter-dependence of humankind, if it continues to acquiesce in the social isolation of the disabled persons and to deny them full participation in its life." From the statement "The Disabled and the wholeness of the Family of God" issued by the World Council of Churches' Vth Assembly in Nairobi, 1975.

The statement above shows that the question about churches and people with disabilities starts with a need within the churches. When we think about people with disabilities, we often have a tendency to think about a group of people that are weak, who need to be taken care of. Churches frequently have the tendency to thrive on doing good deeds. Quite often people with disabilities are a group that seems to fulfill this need. This type of attitude does not promote equality. The gospel challenges us to take a different and more constructive attitude towards this issue, to see that "the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable" (1 Corinthians 12:22).

This particular word from the apostle Paul is interesting because it shows that it is the needs of the whole church in Corinth that is at stake, and not the needs of a particular weak group within the church. We can also notice that the apostle writes about the parts that seem to be weaker and not the parts that are weak, which shows us that what seems to be weak is not always weak in reality. The question about the place for people with disabilities within the churches is a theological issue and the attitude that the churches takes to that issue says something about the theology of the churches. The churches approach to this issue is a theological statement, whether this is made consciously or not.

That is the reason why we need to address the question about the theological understanding of this issue within the World Council of Churches. But before

we do that we need to ask ourselves, who are people with disabilities? We have to deal with the question about the sociological understanding of people with disabilities before we approach the theological side of this issue.

EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK AND DEFINITIONS

In December 1993, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a document called "The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities". This document is interesting in many respects, because it gives a comprehensive foundation for the understanding of disability issues and guidelines for a policy concerning this matter. The Standard Rules deal with almost every aspect of human life stating the rights for disabled people in different areas. The Standard Rules are directed towards the states, but also the churches can be challenged by them.

A preamble directed to the States of the world recalls several conventions earlier adopted by the United Nations, which is a way of underlining the fact that all the rights stated in them, such as the human rights, the rights of the children etc. also concern persons with disabilities and the Standard Rules only makes explicit what is implicit in these earlier conventions. The reason why the Standard Rules did not get the status at the convention was that there would not be a need for a specific convention on the rights for persons with disabilities. All the earlier conventions ought to be enough.

In the introduction to the Standard Rules, there is a distinction between the terms disability and handicap. It says: The term "disability" summarizes a great number of different functional limitations occurring in any population in any country of the world. People may be disabled by physical, intellectual or sensory- impairment, medical conditions or mental illnesses. Such impairments, conditions or illnesses may be permanent or transitory in nature.

The term "handicap" means the loss or limitations of opportunities to take part in the life of the community on equal level with others. It describes the encounter between the person with a disability and the environment. The purpose of this term is to emphasize the focus on the shortcomings in the environment and in many organized activities in the society, for example, information, communication, and education, which prevent persons with disabilities from participating on equal terms.

The term "encounter" is important in this text. "Handicap" is not a category that is connected to a special person that has a disability, but something that

appears when people meet each other. That means that "handicap" is a relative term and does not indicate a permanent condition. This is important because this means that when a person with a disability encounters his or her environment it is possible to change the conditions for that encounter and then change takes away the handicap. A person with a disability does not necessarily have to have a handicap.

Within the World Council of Churches we take this thought one step further by using the term "differently abled" which indicates a possibility for a person and not a limitation that the term "disability" implies. We have all different abilities so can we say that we all are persons with disabilities? Perhaps that might be the case from a philosophical point of view, but still we need a term that is not that inclusive. Otherwise it would be pointless to talk about a special group, persons with disabilities, and then our interest in this issue would be in vain. Because of that, we speak about persons with disabilities.

One rule, number 12, is of special interest for the World Council of Churches, since it concerns the rights of people with disabilities when it comes to religion. It says:

"States will encourage measures for equal participation by persons with disabilities in the religious life of their communities.

1. States should encourage, in consultation with religious authorities, measures to eliminate discrimination and make religious activities accessible to persons with disabilities.

2. States should encourage the distribution of information on disability matters to religious institutions and organizations. States should also encourage religious authorities to include information on disability policies in the training for religious professions, as well as in religious education programmes.

3. They should also encourage the accessibility of religious literature to persons with sensory impairments.

4. States and/or religious organizations should consult with organizations of persons with disabilities when developing measures for equal participation in religious activities."

The Standard Rules help us to see handicap as something that is not static,

something we can change by looking at the relationship between a person with a disability and his or her environment. That means that practically every issue is connected to people with disabilities. So whatever task we involve ourselves in we have to be aware of this issue. This becomes particularly important when we relate this to the question of peace and justice because injustice and war often cause disabilities. We can mention malnutrition, famine, communicable diseases, poor quality of health care, war, torture, etc. With this sociological understanding of people with disabilities issue we have a foundation for theological reflection. How can we understand it from the gospel's point of view and what does this mean for the praxis of the churches?

THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

It is easy to find texts in the Bible that are problematic to interpret from this sociological understanding that we developed earlier in this paper. When dealing with these questions we must be aware of the chronological gaps between the texts in the Bible and the present. We who work within this issue in a pastoral praxis must continue to re-examine and interpret these texts in response to present realities.

The question related to the Old Testament starts with the text about the priest in Leviticus 21:16-23. The Hebrew word here can both mean a physical or a moral defection. But it is the former significance of that word that has always been the understanding of it in this context. We can understand the meaning behind this text if we relate it to Malachi 1:7-8, where the prophet complains about the people having offered defiled food on the Lord's altar. The idea is that things offered to God would be good things, and not such things you would have thrown away anyhow. We can notice that in the prophecy about the priests in the future temple in Ezekiel 44 nothing is being said about their physical conditions.

There is in the Old Testament thought that you should take care of the weak. For example, we can mention Deuteronomy 27:18 where we read about a curse upon him who misdirects a blind man. That a leader should be like a good shepherd, and such a shepherd cared about the weak. In other prophecies in the Old Testament we can see that the ones that seem to be weak are special in God's plan for the salvation and we see how the idea of suffering as a way to atonement develops in the Israeli prophecies. We can mention the famous prophecy in Isaiah 53, but also Joel 3:10, Micah 4:7 and Zephaniah 3:19.

In the New Testament, disability is most often mentioned in the gospels, in connection with miracles that Jesus performed. Many people that are involved in the persons with disabilities issue think that the stories about the healings of the sick that Jesus carried out are problematic. They ask if you have to be healthy in order to come to the fellowship of Jesus. How shall we understand the relationship of Jesus towards persons with disabilities? We cannot find a simple pattern for how Jesus acts when he meets persons with disabilities. When he meets a paralyzed man he says to him: "Man, your sins are forgiven you." (Luke 5:20). This could indicate a connection between sickness and sins but it does not have to be interpreted in that way. Some think that it is good that Jesus is not primarily interested in man's sickness, but something else, his sins.

In the story about the healing of the man who was blind since his birth, when the disciples ask Jesus " who has sinned, the man or his parents", Jesus answers them: "It was not that this man has sinned or his parents, but that the work of God might be made manifest in him." (John 9:3). The conclusion we can make from these two stories from the gospels, is that we cannot say, based on the New Testament that there is a connection between sins and sicknesses. What we can say is, Jesus sees every person as an individual, each one with different needs, and he meets each one in the proper way for that specific person.

The gospel of John teaches us that the miracles are signs that show us the glory of Jesus. This means the focus in the stories about the healing that Jesus performs, is Jesus himself, his person and work, and must be understood in that context.

Here we can connect the prophecies mentioned from the Old Testament where we see the idea of atonement with the message of the cross and the teaching about weakness that we see in the New Testament, especially in the two letters to the Corinthians. Paul writes about Jesus in Second Corinthians 13:4: "For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we shall live with him by the power of God".

If we relate this passage to the words from First Corinthians 12, "the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable", we can see that the question about the place of the weak in the church is not a question in the margin of the churches' life but a matter of how the centre of the gospel effects our life in practice. We cannot leave this question within the churches' periphery but it must have effect in the very centre of the churches' life. This

is a question about how the message of the cross affects our lives as Christians and this has implications for our credibility as churches.

We need a conversion within the churches. This is not a question for some enthusiasts in the margin of the churches but a concern for every part of it. Every aspect of human life has relationship to the persons with disabilities issue so in every part of the work in the churches there is a need for an awareness of this issue. This is a challenge to all God's people, with no exemptions.

THE CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCHES

The World Council of Churches should inspire and challenge all its member churches and Christians throughout the world to understand the importance of this issue, and to take the challenge seriously. As the WCC is able to acknowledge, accept and receive the abilities of persons with disabilities in all areas of its ministry, then there will no longer be a need to develop specialized methods for service to them. A genuine and reciprocal relationship that offers full inclusion of people with disabilities will serve as a model of empowerment for Christians throughout the world.

The churches' need to look at its own community: Is it an environment that is open to persons with disabilities? This concerns the physical facilities, for instance are they accessible for people that need wheelchairs or can people with hearing difficulties take part in the activities of the churches? It is also a challenge to the attitude towards persons with disabilities within the churches. Do we see them as a weak group that need to be taken care of or do we recognise that persons with disabilities have a ministry within the churches?

It is important to understand that it is not a question simply about how the churches should help persons with disabilities but what persons with disabilities can give to the churches. Paul writes: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:7). The churches waste resources if they are not taking care of what God has given to each of us through the Spirit. The New Testament gives us a vision of the Church as *koinonia*, a community of people with different but complementary capacities which is a vision of wholeness.

It is of special importance that this issue is highlighted in seminaries. As leaders in the church, pastors play an important role in the churches. It is

also important that pastors have a good understanding for the situation of persons with disabilities so they can meet them in pastoral counselling. It is also important to understand what challenges the persons with disabilities issue gives to the liturgical praxis of the churches. Many churches that have opened their worship for groups of people with disabilities have realised that they have to make changes in their practical worship to make it inclusive for every one. This experience has brought an enrichment to the worship that has been good for all the members of the church, and not only the persons with disabilities.

Another important question for the churches is to focus on the relation between the persons with disabilities issue and human rights. The social situation for persons with disabilities in many countries is problematic and the churches need to be aware of that, especially persons with disabilities. Women in many countries experience a double discrimination.

Here we can recall the preamble to The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, which reminds the states of the fact that the convention on human rights also includes persons with disabilities. This seems to be so obvious that it should not need to be said. But the fact that it is said shows that it is not as evident as it should be. This shows how important it is for the churches to be involved in this issue. In a society where it is not obvious that human rights include people with disabilities, the churches' voice is needed to raise awareness of the ongoing discrimination. That the churches can do from their belief that everyone is created in the image of God and, as such, has a value as a human being and the right to life with dignity.

The World Council of Churches can be an important body that coordinates the efforts of churches' activities in this area and inspires its members to develop and implement strategies. We need a global network for this work and it is only natural the World Council of Churches takes leadership and becomes a centre in such a network.

*Lay Participation Towards Inclusive Community Working Group Meeting
May 1997*

TOWARDS COMMON WITNESS

*A call to adopt responsible relationships in mission
and to renounce proselytism*

PREFACE

Within the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches the concern for common witness and the unity of the churches has always been a priority, and proselytism has been recognized as a scandal and counter-witness. Ecumenical statements have repeatedly expressed the need for the clearer practice of responsible relationships in mission, a sharper commitment to witness in unity and renunciation of all forms of proselytism. Yet during these almost 50 years of ecumenical fellowship in the WCC, proselytism has continued to be a painful reality in the life of the churches.¹

The issue of proselytism is again being raised as a major factor dividing the churches and a threat to the ecumenical movement itself. In the face of such a complex situation, the Central Committee in Moscow, 1989, requested the former Commission on World Mission and Evangelism to “take up this issue [of proselytism] for further study and action, examining also the existing statements for up-dating if necessary”. A similar request was made by the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order (Santiago de Compostela, 1993), which asked for a “new and broader study of mission, evangelism and proselytism”.

The present document, which has been elaborated by Programme Unit II, is in response to these requests. In order to reflect accurately on current realities and find appropriate ways forward, the Unit embarked on a broad consultative study process. Mission agencies, churches, missiologists and theologians, local congregations and monastic orders in different parts of the world participated by correspondence. Furthermore a series of consultations was organized: “Towards Responsible Relationships in Mission” (Chambésy, 1993); an Orthodox consultation on “Mission and Proselytism” (Sergiev Possad, Russia, 1995); “Called to Common Witness” (Manila, 1995); and “Common Witness” (Bossey, 1996). Special efforts were made to bring together in dialogue the “proselytizers” and “proselytized” and to involve not

only WCC member churches but members of the evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic constituencies.

Documents and statements on this issue from churches and other organizations have been carefully studied and analyzed and their insights incorporated in the present statement. Permanent contact has been maintained with the Joint Working Group in a spirit of mutual cooperation and sharing. Its study document, "The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness" (1995), was one of the basic texts used in the elaboration of this statement. The Unit II study, however, was undertaken with much broader participation, and emphasizes the missiological and pastoral implications of proselytism in the life of local churches on the way towards common witness and Christian unity. An earlier draft of this statement was used as a resource paper at the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Salvador, Brazil (1996).

This statement is presented in the conviction that it is both timely and important for churches in all parts of the world. Its genesis also reflects the spirit of the WCC's "Common Understanding and Vision" document, in that it has provided space for wider participation in ecumenical discussions.

INTRODUCTION

Dramatic developments in different parts of the world in recent years have compelled the ecumenical family to re-examine issues related to common witness and proselytism in greater depth. For the WCC the situation is made even more urgent by the fact that complaints of proselytistic activities are being made against some of its own member churches as well as churches and groups outside its fellowship.

Among present-day realities damaging the relationships between churches in different parts of the world and thus requiring the urgent attention of the ecumenical family are:

- competitive missionary activities, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America, carried out independently by foreign missionary groups, churches and individuals, often directed at people already belonging and committed to one of the churches in those countries, and often leading to the establishment of parallel ecclesial structures;

- the re-emergence of tensions between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church concerning the Eastern Rite Catholic churches;²
- a sharp increase in the number of new mission agencies based in the South working independently in other parts of the world, often without contact with the churches in those countries;
- growing frustration among churches, especially in the South, whose members are being lured to other churches by offers of humanitarian aid;
- the humanitarian work done among immigrants, poor, lonely and uprooted people in big cities intended to influence them to change their denominational allegiance;
- the growth of religious fundamentalism and intolerance;
- the growing impact of sects and new religious movements in many parts of the world;
- the discrediting of established minority Christian churches in multifaith communities.

The aims of this statement are: (1) to make churches and Christians aware of the bitter reality of proselytism today; (2) to call those involved in proselytism to recognize its disastrous effects on church unity, relationships among Christians and the credibility of the gospel and, therefore, to renounce it; and (3) to encourage the churches and mission agencies to avoid all forms of competition in mission and to commit themselves anew to witness in unity.

A. CHRISTIAN WITNESS AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

1. The mission imperative

Christian mission is primarily and ultimately God's mission — the *missio Dei*. It is centred in the loving and eternal purpose of the triune God for humankind and all of creation, revealed in Jesus Christ. Central to God's mission is the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit, who continues the mission of Christ through the church and remains the source of its missionary dynamism. The WCC Canberra assembly (1991) described a vision of mission in unity: "A reconciled humanity and renewed creation (cf. Eph. 1:9-10) is the goal of the mission of the church. The vision of God uniting all things in Christ is the driving force of its life and sharing."³

As the body of Christ, constituted, sustained and energized by the life-giving

presence of the Holy Spirit, the church is missionary by nature. It proclaims that in Jesus Christ the incarnate Word, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all as God's gift of love, mercy and liberation.

Participating in God's mission is an imperative for all Christians and all churches, not only for particular individuals or specialized groups. It is an inner compulsion, rooted in the profound demands of Christ's love, to invite others to share in the fullness of life Jesus came to bring (cf. John 10:10).

Mission in Christ's way is *holistic*, for the whole person and the totality of life are inseparable in God's plan of salvation accomplished in Jesus Christ. It is *local* — "the primary responsibility for mission, where there is a local church, is with that church in its own place".⁴ It is also *universal*, that is, to all peoples, beyond all frontiers of race, caste, gender, culture, nation — to "the ends of the earth" in every sense (cf. Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47).

2. Common witness: mission in unity

Numerous WCC documents have recalled the intrinsic relation between the credibility of the mission of the church in the world and the unity among Christians — underscored in the prayer of Jesus "that they all may be one... so that the world may believe" (John 17:21) and historically realized among the apostles in Jerusalem already on the day of Pentecost. Common witness is "the witness that the churches, even while separated, bear together, especially through joint efforts, by manifesting whatever divine gifts of truth and life they already share and experience in common".⁵ It may be thought of as "a 'eucharistic vision of life' which gives thanks for what God has done, is doing, and will do for the salvation of the world through acts of joyous self-offering".⁶

Despite the many barriers which keep the churches apart, the WCC member churches have been able to recognize a certain degree of ecclesial communion among themselves, imperfect though that may yet be. Confessing "the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures", they seek through the WCC to "fulfil together their common calling to the glory of one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit".⁷ On this basis, other grounds for common witness to the whole world can be affirmed together. Mutual recognition of baptism (as expressed in the WCC's "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" text) is the foundation for Christian unity and common witness.

Authentic common witness presupposes respect and understanding for other traditions and confessions. What should be emphasized is that which is common and can be done together, rather than the barriers which separate. Even when apparently irreconcilable differences remain on certain issues, the truth should be spoken in love (Eph. 4:15), for the building up of the church (Eph. 4:12), rather than for giving prominence to one's position over against that of others. There is more that unites the churches than separates them. These unifying elements should be looked for in building up witness in unity.

3. Mission in the context of religious freedom

God's truth and love are given freely and call for a free response. Free will is one of the major gifts with which God has entrusted humans. God does not force anyone to accept God's revelation and does not save anyone by force. On the basis of this notion, the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches (in process of formation) developed a definition of religious freedom as a fundamental human right. This definition was adopted by the WCC First Assembly in Amsterdam (1948), and at the suggestion of the WCC's Commission of the Churches on International Affairs it was subsequently incorporated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes the freedom to change his/her religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others, in public or in private, to manifest his/her religion or belief, in teaching, practice, worship and observance." The same principle is to be applied in mission work.

The WCC Fifth Assembly (1975) reaffirmed the centrality of religious liberty, stating that "the right to religious freedom has been and continues to be a major concern of member churches and the WCC. However this right should never be seen as belonging exclusively to the church... This right is inseparable from other fundamental human rights. No religious community should plead for its own religious liberty without active respect and reverence for the faith and basic rights of others. Religious liberty should never be used to claim privileges. For the church this right is essential so that it can fulfil its responsibilities which arise out of the Christian faith. Central to these responsibilities is the obligation to serve the whole community."⁸ One's own freedom must always respect, affirm and promote the freedom of others; it must not contravene the golden rule: "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you" (Matt. 7:12).

B. PROSELYTISM — A COUNTERWITNESS

While the word “proselyte” was originally used to designate a person who became a member of the Jewish community by believing in Yahweh and respecting the Law of Moses, and subsequently, in early Christian times, for a person of another faith who converted to Christianity, proselytism in later centuries took on a negative connotation due to changes in the content, motivation, spirit and methods of “evangelism”.

“Proselytism” is now used to mean the encouragement of Christians who belong to a church to change their denominational allegiance, through ways and means that “contradict the spirit of Christian love, violate the freedom of the human person and diminish trust in the Christian witness of the church”.⁹

Proselytism is “the corruption of witness”.¹⁰ On the surface, proselytism may appear as genuine and enthusiastic missionary activity; and some people involved in it are genuinely committed Christians who believe that they are doing mission in Christ’s way. It is the aim, spirit and methodology of this activity which make it proselytism.

Some of the characteristics which clearly distinguish proselytism from authentic Christian witness are:

- Unfair criticism or caricaturing of the doctrines, beliefs and practices of another church without attempting to understand or enter into dialogue on those issues. Some who venerate icons are accused of worshipping idols; others are ridiculed for alleged idolatry towards Mary and the saints or denounced for praying for the dead.
- Presenting one’s church or confession as “the *true* church” and its teachings as “the *right* faith” and the only way to salvation, rejecting baptism in other churches as invalid and persuading people to be rebaptized.
- Portraying one’s own church as having high moral and spiritual status over against the perceived weaknesses and problems of other churches.
- Taking advantage of and using unfaithfully the problems which may arise in another church for winning new members for one’s own church.
- Offering humanitarian aid or educational opportunities as an inducement to join another church.

- Using political, economic, cultural and ethnic pressure or historical arguments to win others to one's own church.
- Taking advantage of lack of education or Christian instruction which makes people vulnerable to changing their church allegiance.
- Using physical violence or moral and psychological pressure to induce people to change their church affiliation. This includes the use of media techniques profiling a particular church in a way that excludes, disparages or stigmatizes its adherents, harassment through repeated house calls, material and spiritual threats, and insistence on the "superior" way to salvation offered by a particular church.
- Exploiting people's loneliness, illness, distress or even disillusionment with their own church in order to "convert" them.

Common witness is constructive: it enriches, challenges, strengthens and builds up solid Christian relationships and fellowship. Through word and deed, it makes the gospel relevant to the contemporary world. Proselytism is a perversion of authentic Christian witness and thus a counterwitness. It does not build up but destroys. It brings about tensions, scandal and division, and is thus a destabilizing factor for the witness of the church of Christ in the world. It is always a wounding of *koinonia*, creating not fellowship but antagonistic parties.

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that some people may move from one church to another out of true and genuine conviction, without any proselytistic pressure or manipulation, as a free decision in response to their experience of the life and witness of another church.

The churches must continually assess their own internal life to see whether some of the reasons people change church allegiance may lie with the churches themselves.

C. GUIDELINES FOR RESPONSIBLE RELATIONSHIPS IN MISSION

1. Issues for further study and reflection

Growth towards responsible relationships in mission which promote genuine Christian common witness and avoid proselytism will require further dialogue, reflection and study in a number of important ecclesiological, theological and other areas:

- historical and social factors, including (1) diversity of experience among different churches, (2) unawareness or different understandings of the history of one's own church and other churches, leading to wounded memories, and (3) dissimilar perspectives and perceptions among majority and minority churches in contexts where a single church has come to be identified with a given nation, people or culture;
- different and even contradictory understandings of the content of Christian faith — regarding worship, sacraments and the teaching authority of the church — and of the limits of legitimate diversity in these areas;
- different understandings of the nature of an individual's church membership and Christian commitment, particularly reflected in the use of expressions conveying value judgments (such as “nominal”, “committed”, “true” or “born-again Christian”, “unchurched”, “evangelization” and “re-evangelization”), which are often a source of tension among the churches, leading to accusations of proselytism;
- different understandings of the aim of mission, leading to differences in ethos and style of mission, particularly around those concepts of “church growth” and “church expansion” which seem to give priority to the number of “converts” and thus seem to encourage mission among those who are already members of a Christian church;
- different understandings of the universality of mission, particularly around the validity of the early Christian principle of “canonical territory”, according to which the local church already present in any place is primarily responsible for the Christian life of the people there and no other Christian individual, group or church may act or establish ecclesial structures without consulting and cooperating with the local church.

2. The way forward: practical proposals

Despite the problems still to be overcome, ecumenical reflection and experience in the last few decades have demonstrated that reconciliation and mutual understanding are possible and that witness in unity can become a reality on an even greater scale.

As new contexts call for new initiatives in proclaiming the gospel in unity, churches in partnership in mission commit themselves to:

- deepened understanding of what it means to be church in today's world, and acceptance and celebration of their inter-relatedness in the one body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12);
- deepened conviction that it is God's mission in which the churches share as God's co-workers, not their own;
- efforts to come to a greater common understanding and vision of their missionary role in contemporary society;
- reaching out together in Christ's way to new frontiers of mission — listening, accompanying, walking with, resourcing, receiving from one another;
- renewed determination to manifest together “the one hope of [their] calling” (Eph. 4:4) in order to share more fully in the divine plan of salvation for the reconciliation and gathering up of all peoples and all things in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:9-10).

Because the way to evangelizing in ecumenical fellowship and partnership is still long, churches in partnership in mission must:

- repent of past failures and reflect more self-critically on their ways of relating to one another and their methods of evangelizing, in order to overcome anything in their theological or doctrinal expressions or missionary policies and strategies which shows lack of love, understanding and trust of other churches;
- renounce all forms of denominational competition and rivalry and the temptation to proselytize members of other Christian traditions as contrary to Jesus' prayer for the unity of his disciples (John 17:21);
- avoid establishing parallel ecclesial structures, but rather stimulate, help and cooperate with the existing local churches in their evangelistic work in society at large as well as in relation to their own people, especially so-called nominal members;
- condemn any manipulation of humanitarian assistance to individual Christians or churches to induce people into changing their denominational allegiance or to further the missionary goals of one church at the expense of another;
- help people who are in process of changing their church allegiance to discern whether they are being guided by worthy or unworthy motives (such as social advancement or better life opportunities);
- learn to “speak the truth in love” to one another when they consider others to be proselytizing or engaging in dishonest practices in evangelism.

This Christian fellowship and partnership will not be possible unless Christians and churches:

- listen to one another in genuine dialogue aimed at overcoming ignorance, prejudices or misunderstandings, understanding their differences in the perspective of Christian unity and avoiding unjust accusations, polemics, disparagement and rejection;
- ensure greater sharing of information and accountability in mission at all levels, including prior discussion before launching programmes for evangelism;
- encourage, strengthen and complement one another in missionary activity in an ecumenical spirit, including prior consultation with the church in an area to see what are the possibilities of missionary collaboration and witness in unity;
- demonstrate willingness to learn from others — for example, from their dynamism, enthusiasm and joy in mission, their sense of community, their rejoicing in the Spirit, their spirituality;
- make greater efforts for inner renewal in their own traditions and cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

With the Salvador world mission conference, “we decry the practice of those who carry out their endeavours in mission and evangelism in ways which destroy the unity of the body of Christ, human dignity and the very lives and cultures of those being ‘evangelized’; we call on them to confess their participation in and to renounce proselytism”.¹¹

Called to one hope, we commit ourselves to our common call to mission and to work towards mission in unity. We actively seek a new era of “mission in Christ’s way” at the dawn of the third millennium, enriched by one another’s gifts and bound together in the Holy Spirit.

As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:20-23).

RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to commending the document “Towards Common Witness” to the churches for their reflection and action, Central Committee approved the following recommendations to facilitate the implementation of the document:

1. *That the churches and related agencies:*
 - a) make greater efforts to educate their own faithful in local congregations, Sunday schools, training centres and seminaries to respect and love members of other churches as sisters and brothers in Christ;
 - b) actively promote knowledge of the heritages and contributions of other churches that, despite differences, confess the same Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, worship the same triune God and are engaged in the same witness in the world;
 - c) promote efforts towards reconciliation by addressing historical wounds and bitter memories;
 - d) initiate (with the assistance of the WCC when necessary) encounter and dialogue at the local, national and regional levels with those engaging in mission work that is perceived as proselytism, in order to help them understand their motivations, make them aware of the negative impact of their activities, and promote responsible relationships in mission;
 - e) seek opportunities for working together with other churches on pastoral and social issues that affect local communities and countries as a whole, and be open to authentic cooperation with others in addressing the needs of the people being served;
 - f) together renounce proselytism as a denial of authentic witness and an obstruction to the unity of the church, and urge support for common witness, unity and understanding among the churches proclaiming the gospel;
 - g) continue to pray together for Christian unity, allowing God’s Spirit to lead the churches into fuller truth and faithfulness.

2. *That the World Council of Churches:*

- a) strengthen its emphasis on ecumenical formation using all resources of its education sector, in view of the growing trend towards confessionalism and confessional rivalries;
- b) undertake a study on ecclesiology and mission, since many of the points of tension and division in relation to common witness stem from conflicting understandings in these areas.

Although it is recognized that the main responsibility for implementing the “Towards Common Witness” document lies with the churches, the WCC should play a facilitating role in stimulating the dialogue within and among the churches.

World Council of Churches, September 1997 — final text

NOTES

1. In fact, concern about proselytism as an ecumenical issue antedates the establishment of the WCC. The 1920 Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which proposed the foundation of a “koinonia” of churches, asked for the cessation of proselytizing activities. In the preliminary Faith and Order and Life and Work meetings which took place in the same year the issue of proselytism was again raised. Since the very establishment of the WCC the issue of proselytism has been identified as one of the hindrances to Christian unity. As early as 1954, the Central Committee in Evanston decided that in view of difficulties which were affecting relationships between WCC member churches, a commission should be appointed to study further the issue of proselytism and religious liberty. After a number of years of labourious study, a statement on “Christian Witness, Proselytism and Religious Liberty in the Setting of the World Council of Churches”, drafted by the commission and revised twice by the Central Committee (1956 and 1960), was received by the WCC Third Assembly (New Delhi, 1961).

Issues of proselytism and common witness have also been on the agenda of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, which has elaborated three important study documents: “Common Witness and Proselytism” (1970); “Common Witness” (1982); and “The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness” (1995).

Furthermore, many documents and declarations on the issue of common witness and proselytism have been produced recently by local and international bilateral dialogues between churches. Studies have also been done by the Conference of European Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches.

2. The Eastern Rite Catholic churches originated in those groups of former Orthodox who entered into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church around the bishop of Rome, while retaining various Eastern liturgical and canonical traditions inherited from their mother churches.

3. *Signs of the Spirit — Official Report of the Seventh Assembly*, ed. Michael Kinnamon, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1991, p.100.

4. Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, “Called to One Hope — The Gospel in Diverse Cultures”, Salvador, Brazil, 1996, Report of Section IV.

5. Thomas Stransky, “Common Witness”, in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1991, p.197.

6. *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia — Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order*, Santiago de Compostela, 1993, ed. Thomas F. Best and Günther Gassmann, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1994, p.254.

7. WCC “Basis”, from “Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches”.

8. Cf. *Breaking Barriers, The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi*, ed. David M. Paton, Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976, p.106. Cf. also the report of the Orthodox Consultation on “Mission and Proselytism”, Sergiev Possad, Russia, 1995.

9. Cf. report of the Sergiev Possad consultation on "Mission and Proselytism".

10. "Revised Report on 'Christian Witness, Proselytism and Religious Liberty in the Setting of the World Council of Churches'", in *Minutes and Reports of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, St Andrews, Scotland, August 1960*, Geneva, WCC, 1960, p.214.

11. Salvador world mission conference, Report of Section IV.

WCC COMBINED GENERAL & ACTIVITIES BUDGET

	NOTE	WCC TOTAL	GENERAL	ACTIVITIES
INCOME				
EXTERNAL INCOME				
UDI (undesignated)		6,511,332	6,511,332	0
Investment (Endowment & General)		2,237,916	1,524,759	713,157
Production/Sales/Property/Misc		2,477,192	2,477,192	0
Other Organisations		3,225,034	3,225,034	0
Designated Funds		56,468,928	18,259,329	38,209,599
TOTAL EXTERNAL INCOME		70,920,402	31,997,646	38,922,756
INTERNAL INCOME				
Production/Sales/Property/Misc		2,237,023	2,237,023	0
Transfers from Activities		873,681	612,000	261,681
TOTAL INTERNAL INCOME		3,110,704	2,849,023	261,681
TOTAL INCOME		74,031,106	34,846,669	39,184,437
EXPENDITURE				
EXTERNAL EXPENDITURE				
Staff total costs		24,996,572	23,939,947	1,056,625
Development & training		219,388	219,388	0
Governing Bodies		395,000	395,000	0
Meetings/Consultations		4,265,460	1,095,160	3,170,300
Consultancy & Advice		300,000	300,000	0
Activities Grants/Development		32,822,184	760,404	32,061,780
Other operating costs		11,022,420	9,022,663	1,999,757
TOTAL EXTERNAL EXPENDITURE		74,021,024	35,732,562	38,288,462

	NOTE	WCC TOTAL	GENERAL	ACTIVITIES
INTERNAL EXPENDITURE				
Shared Costs	1	59,840	59,840	0
Infrastructure charge		1	1	0
WCC contribution ENI		650,000	650,000	0
Savings required		(595,002)	(595,002)	0
Transfers to General		873,681	261,681	612,000
TOTAL INTERNAL EXPENDITURE		988,520	376,520	612,000
TRANSFERS				
Budget +	2	0	0	0
Rebuilding reserves		290,000	290,000	0
Other transfers		(1,063,023)	(506,620)	(556,403)
Assembly Fund transfer		(1,000,000)	(1,000,000)	0
TOTAL TRANSFERS		(1,773,023)	(1,216,620)	(556,403)
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		73,236,521	34,892,462	38,344,059
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	3	794,585	(45,793)	840,378

Note 1: Basic Infrastructure charge made on all but General Secretariat & F, S & A.

Note 2: Budget Plus fund is a charge of 5% on undesignated and general income.

Note 3: UDI and General Fund (including Assembly allocation) allocated 250,000 to Bossey and proportionately to Unit 1, Relationships & Communications.

WCC

	WCC TOT GENERAL	WCC GEN UDI	BUDGET PLUS
INCOME			
EXTERNAL INCOME			
UDI (undesignated)	6,511,332	6,511,332	
Investment (Endowment & General)	1,524,759		
Production/Sales/Property/Misc	2,477,192		
Other Organisations	3,225,034		
Designated Funds	18,259,329		
TOTAL EXTERNAL INCOME	31,997,646	6,511,332	0
INTERNAL INCOME			
Production/Sales/Property/Misc	2,237,023		
Transfers from Activites	612,000		
TOTAL INTERNAL INCOME	2,849,023	0	0
TOTAL INCOME	34,846,669	6,511,332	0
EXPENDITURE			
EXTERNAL EXPENDITURE			
Staff total costs	23,939,947	0	655,000
Development & training	219,388	0	219,388
Governing Bodies	395,000	0	0
Meetings/Consultations	1,095,160	0	0
Consultancy & Advice	300,000	0	300,000
Activities Grants/Development	760,404	0	0
Other operating costs	9,022,663	(177,000)	64,145
TOTAL EXTERNAL EXPENDITURE	35,732,562	(177,000)	1,238,533
INTERNAL EXPENDITURE			
Shared Costs	59,840	0	0
Infrastructure charge	1	(20,135)	0
WCC contribution ENI	650,000	0	0
Savings required	(595,002)	0	0
Transfers to General	261,681	0	0
TOTAL INTERNAL EXPENDITURE	376,520	(20,135)	0
TRANSFERS			
Budget +	0	325,567	(1,238,533)
Rebuilding reserves	290,000	0	0
Other transfers	(506,620)	0	0
Assembly Fund transfer	(1,000,000)	(1,000,000)	
TOTAL TRANSFERS	(1,216,620)	(674,433)	(1,238,533)
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	34,892,462	(871,568)	(0)
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(45,793)	7,382,900	0
ALLOCATION WCC GEN/UDI		(7,382,900)	0
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(45,793)	0	0

TOTAL GENERAL/OPERATING

GENSEC	UNITS	RELATIONS	COMMUN- ICATIONS	F,S & A	BOSSEY
857,082	132,626	47,554	8,000	310,520	168,977
0	0	0	811,178	741,514	924,500
0	1,363,651	0	65,000	1,796,383	0
52,000	17,293,376	253,953	0	0	660,000
909,082	18,789,653	301,507	884,178	2,848,417	1,753,477
0	0	47,000	616,200	1,573,823	0
0	612,000	0	0	0	0
0	612,000	47,000	616,200	1,573,823	0
909,082	19,401,653	348,507	1,500,378	4,422,240	1,753,477
1,372,556	12,521,091	948,000	2,662,200	4,175,300	1,605,800
130,000	265,000	0	0	0	0
10,277	1,025,000	20,740	26,643	0	12,500
0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	510,300	56,434	177,770	15,900
297,023	1,583,534	144,425	1,591,563	4,967,173	551,800
1,809,856	15,394,625	1,623,465	4,336,840	9,320,243	2,186,000
59,840	0	0	0	0	0
(656,544)	3,761,968	332,517	888,268	(4,516,773)	210,699
0	0	0	650,000	0	0
0	0	0	0	(211,280)	(383,722)
0	0	261,681	0	0	0
(596,704)	3,761,968	594,198	1,538,268	(4,728,053)	(173,023)
2,600	864,669	12,698	0	0	33,000
0	290,000	0	0	0	0
(306,670)	0	0	12,500	(169,950)	(42,500)
(304,070)	1,154,669	12,698	12,500	(169,950)	(9,500)
909,082	20,311,262	2,230,361	5,887,608	4,422,240	2,003,477
0	(909,609)	(1,881,854)	(4,387,230)	0	(250,000)
0	903,806	1,869,849	4,359,245	0	250,000
0	(5,803)	(12,004)	(27,986)	0	0

WCC TOTAL ACTIVITIES

WCC TOTAL ACTIVITIES

INCOME

EXTERNAL INCOME

UDI (undesignated)
Investment (Endowment & General)
Production/Sales/Property/Misc
Other Organisations
Designated Funds

TOTAL EXTERNAL INCOME

INTERNAL INCOME

Production/Sales/Property/Misc
Transfers from Activities

TOTAL INTERNAL INCOME

TOTAL INCOME

0				
713,157	0	618,836	(11,204)	105,525
0				
0				
38,209,599	71,000	37,663,599	0	475,000
38,922,756	71,000	38,282,435	(11,204)	580,525
0				
261,681		0	261,681	0
261,681	0	0	261,681	0
39,184,437	71,000	38,282,435	250,477	580,525

EXPENDITURE	WCC TOTAL ACTIVITIES	GENSEC	UNITS	RELATIONS	BOSSEY
EXTERNAL EXPENDITURE					
Staff total costs	1,056,625		836,051	220,574	
Development & training	0				
Governing Bodies	0				
Meetings/Consultations	3,170,300		3,170,300		
Consultancy & Advice	0				
Activities Grants/Development	32,061,780	280,780	31,306,000		475,000
Other operating costs	1,999,757		1,958,650	41,107	
TOTAL EXTERNAL EXPENDITURE	38,288,462	280,780	37,271,001	261,681	475,000
INTERNAL EXPENDITURE					
Shared Costs	0				
Infrastructure charge	0				
WCC contribution ENI	0				
Savings required	0				
Transfers to General	612,000		612,000		
TOTAL INTERNAL EXPENDITURE	612,000	0	612,000	0	0
TRANSFERS					
Budget +	0				
Rebuilding reserves	0				
Other transfers	(556,403)	(200,000)	(356,403)	0	0
TOTAL TRANSFERS	(556,403)	(200,000)	(356,403)	0	0
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	38,344,059	80,780	37,526,598	261,681	475,000
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)					
ALLOCATION WCC GEN/UDI	840,378	(9,780)	755,837	(11,204)	105,525
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	840,378	(9,780)	755,837	(11,204)	105,525

MANDATE OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Audit Committee of the WCC comprises Mr John Briggs (moderator), Mr Geraint Davies, Mr J.-C. Ecklin and Ms Alice Tulloch. At September 1997 the staff representation comprised Rev. Michael Davies (Assistant General Secretary, Finance and Administration, who acted as Secretary), Mr Robert Christeler (Executive Director for the Department of Finance, Services and Administration) and Ms Margaret Reid (Deputy Chief Accountant). It usually meets twice a year. Representatives of the auditors, KPMG, are in attendance at the first part of the meeting to discuss the audit, the accounts and their management letter.

The original terms of reference of the Audit Committee, as agreed in 1977, were as follows:

- a) to review significant financial information for the purposes of giving assurance to the WCC Executive through its Finance Committee that its knowledge of its own finances is accurate and timely;
- b) to provide assurance that an effective accounting system, with adequate internal controls, is in existence;
- c) to oversee the audit function; and
- d) to provide an adequate and independent communication link between the auditors, the staff and the WCC Executive Committee.

The moderator of the Audit Committee was normally a member of the Central Committee and of its Executive Committee. It usually met once or twice a year.

The members of the Audit Committee held an additional meeting in April 1997 to review their work, mandate and membership, and agreed to recommend that the terms of reference of the Committee be revised as follows:

1. To ensure that the accounting processes of the Council, both in the recording and presenting of financial information, conform, as far as

appropriate, to international accounting standards, thereby assuring itself that the accounting practice of the Council is effective and that there are adequate internal controls in place.

2. To receive the draft Financial Report together with the auditors' comments thereon and to assist the staff in preparing the final report for presentation to the governing bodies, thereby giving assurance to the WCC that its knowledge of its own finances is accurate and timely.
3. To receive the auditors' management letter and to assist WCC staff in responding to the points raised, noting any matters that remain outstanding from the previous year.
4. To identify those policy decisions which, as a result of the auditing process, require the action of either the Finance Committee or the Officers acting on their behalf. The minutes of the Audit Committee should be sent to the General Secretary and the Moderator of the Finance Committee, as well as its members.
5. To act as an adequate and independent communication link between the auditors, the staff and the governing bodies of the WCC.
6. To oversee and assess the work of the auditors and to make recommendations concerning their appointment/re-appointment through the Finance Committee to the Central Committee or the Executive Committee.
7. The Committee will often meet with the auditors and staff present, but should from time to time meet on its own without either category present.
8. The Committee shall be composed of a moderator who will normally be a member of the governing bodies of the Council, together with other such members of the governing bodies as shall from time to time be appointed. In addition, there shall be appointed such local members for the Committee, normally resident in the Geneva area, who by their accounting and administrative experience shall enable the Committee to undertake its work efficiently. Such persons shall be appointed on the nomination of the Moderator of the Audit Committee by the Executive Committee or the Officers of the WCC, for a period of three years and shall be eligible for reappointment.

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST *

Report of the Moderator (5.4)

Report of the General Secretary (5.5)

Unit I Activities Report (1.1)

Plenary Session on Worship and Spirituality (1.2)

Unit II Activities Report (2.1)

"Called to One Hope - The Gospel in Diverse Cultures": A Review of the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism

Unit III Activities Report (3.1)

"Listen to What the Spirit is saying to the Churches" (3.2)

"Living Letters"- A report of Visits to the Churches during the Ecumenical Decade in Solidarity with Women

Unit IV Activities Report (4.1)

General Secretariat Offices on Relationships and Communication, Bossey, Management & Finance (5.1)

Programme Coordination Report (5.2)

Report on Programme Evaluation (5.3)

Our Ecumenical Vision (6.1)

Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC: A Policy Statement (6.2) - revised text available in pamphlet form)

Internal Structural Implications of the CUV document (6.3)

Programme and Management Structure for the work of the World Council of Churches: A proposal (6.4)

Issues Related to WCC Governance (6.6)

WCC 50th Anniversary Celebrations - A Framework (6.7)

Background Notes on Public Issues (8.2a-d)

Financial Report 1996 - World Council of Churches

Yearbook 1997 - World Council of Churches

* Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of the document; most are available in English, French, German and Spanish

